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„Creating possible worlds. Challenging concepts of postmodern deconstruction in unnatural children's literature."

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1. Introduction

In the last decade, there has been a growing body of research that has established a corpus of postmodern children's picture books. Literary scholars, such as Anstey, Dresang, Goldstone, Labbo, Pantaleo, Sipe and Nikolajeva have identified and categorized numerous postmodern picture books and the literary features they contain. With regard to reader response to these books, it is argued that postmodern picture books are too complex for their intended audience (Goldstone and Labbo 198). The scholar Hassan attributes a deconstructive nature to postmodern literature (91). McHale puts forward that postmodernism deconstructs the physical book itself (181). Slocombe posits that postmodern works of art are irrational and self-referential (109). Additionally, postmodern literature is classified as highly fragmented (Slocombe 126). Most of these literary features are realized in the form of impossibilities in postmodern picture books, which leave the reader defeated and paralyzed (Eco 77).

Nevertheless, scholars from the field of unnatural narratology have recently questioned the role of postmodern impossibilities in literature (Alber 7). Proponents of this modern literary approach propose that impossibilities in narratives *can* be overcome (Alber 9). Moreover, it is shown that impossible contradictions reveal vital information about human beings themselves (Alber et. al. 375).

In reference to the theoretical implications of unnatural narratology, the present diploma thesis attempts to answer the following research questions:

- How can readers make sense of impossible phenomena in children's picture books?
- In how far do these sense-making strategies enable a reassessment of key postmodern theories about deconstruction, self-referentiality, and fragmentation?
- Can postmodern children's literature be successfully integrated into the corpus of unnatural narratology?

In order to answer the abovementioned questions, 9 postmodern picture books will be examined. In these children's books different manifestations of postmodern literature,

such as metalepsis, *mise en abyme*, playful interaction, white space, intertextuality, and non-linearity will be re-evaluated. Classification schemes proposed by unnatural narratology serve as a categorization model for postmodern impossibilities. Furthermore, the possible worlds theory (PWT), a scientific concept from the field of cognitive approaches to literature, is used as a sense-making strategy for postmodern contradictions. Hence, this thesis will combine cognitive and narratological approaches to literature.

This study contributes to the field of literature studies, as it provides reader-centered sense-making strategies for impossibilities in postmodern children's picture books. Such sense-making models are not put forward by postmodern research on children's literature and are only applied to adult literature in unnatural narratology. That is to say, reading strategies for young and minor audiences were largely ignored in previous studies. The results of this thesis may therefore contribute to the corpus of unnatural narratology, as a re-categorization of *postmodern* children's picture books into *unnatural* children's literature will be conducted.

In order to reach the abovementioned research aims, the first chapter of this thesis will introduce the core principles of unnatural narratology. Furthermore, it will review theories and literature from this modern literary approach. Having critically assessed these differing theses, the chapter will provide a framework for the categorization of impossibilities in children's picture books.

Section three will relate cognitive approaches to literature to unnatural narratology. The chapter will assess different sense-making strategies postulated by cognitive literary sciences and examine propositions about narrative decoding made by unnatural narratology. Ultimately, the chapter will show that unnatural narratology and cognitive approaches to literature can be combined on the basis of PWT.

The fourth section of this thesis provides a brief overview of postmodernism in culture and in literature. Moreover, specific realizations of postmodern literary devices in picture books will be analyzed.

In the final chapters of this diploma thesis the accumulated knowledge about unnatural narratology and possible worlds will be applied to children's literature in order to conduct a re-classification of 9 postmodern picture books into unnatural ones. Furthermore, the chapter provides sense-making strategies for readers to overcome postmodern impossibilities.

2. Unnatural Narratology

Unnatural narratology is a fairly young theoretical approach in the field of literary studies. It provides a framework for analyzing unnatural phenomena, which are mainly impossible or contradictory phenomena, among a variety of literary periods, genres, and styles (Alber 3). By identifying the existence of unnatural narratives throughout different literary periods, unnatural narratology has demonstrated that there are numerous narratives which have not been represented in narratological corpora yet (Klauk and Köppe 96). In addition, the approach has evoked discussions about how to deal with contradictory scenarios in literature and about what logically impossible phenomena reveal "about us and our being in the world" (Alber et. al. 375).

Before investigating how to process contradiction and impossibility (both concepts basically express the same thing, as most contradictions are impossible) it has to be established which criteria characterize unnatural narratives. These may be classified according to their unconventionality and de-familiarizing effect, on the basis of the mimetic nature of a text, or with regard to the impossibilities that such narratives contain (Biwu 172). This thesis will focus on the latter definition, which Jan Alber is a strong proponent of. In the chapters 2.1. and 2.2. it will be thoroughly outlined why Alber's approach is the most suitable framework for categorizing the unnatural.

To quickly summarize his theories: Alber proposes that every scenario, phenomenon, or entity that somehow violates the known laws of physics and logic, which ultimately structure our universe, can be regarded as unnatural (Alber 25). Furthermore, Alber includes human impossibilities into his definition of the unnatural (25). Telepathy, as an illustration, cannot be categorized as a violation of physical or logical laws, while common sense dictates that it is a human impossibility (Alber 25-6).

With regard to narratives, the unnatural may affect three basic elements. It can affect the discourse level, when the discourse no longer represents the story but rather represents itself (Biwu 177). Such an instance of the unnatural can be found in Meg McKinlay's and Leila Rudge's *No Bears* (2013) where it says explicitly on the first pages that "[y]ou can tell it's a book because there are words everywhere. Words like once upon a time, and happily ever after, and the end" (McKinlay and Rudge double spread 4). The unnatural may also tamper with the micro level of a story world, including space, time, and characters which can be transformed into unnatural entities (Biwu 177). For example, the unnatural Henry in Oliver Jeffers' *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006) eats books instead of food (Jeffers double spreads 3-4). Eventually, the unnatural may affect the story world as a whole on a macro level in a sense that the story world itself is impossible (Biwu 177). These unnatural transformations on a macro level can be found in Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005) which contains numerous frame-breaks and multiple instances of ontological metalepsis that render the whole story world impossible.

Nielsen further extends the classification of unnatural narratology to the relation between text and author (275-6). He argues that writers can employ narrative techniques that exceed traditional communication models between the two entities (Nielsen 276). In addition, Nielsen proposes that some narratives, especially unnatural ones, consist of instances where author *and* narrator are detached from experiencing what is being narrated (296). In this case, narration does not communicate anything (Nielsen 296).

The scholar illustrates his ideas with regard to James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* (2003) which contains manifestations of narrative telling that are non-communication, since author and narrator do not communicate what they are experiencing (Nielsen 297). Ultimately, such a form of non-communication is a narratological strategy for authors to break with traditional communication models because "if nothing happened or no one recounted it, or if it is not told to anyone, there could still be narration but no communication" (Nielsen 297).

A literary manifestation of this unnatural non-communication-model can be found in David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001). The picture book includes two double spreads

with excessive amounts of white space (Wiesner double spreads 9-10). The recto on double spread 9 is entirely white and so is the verso on double spread 10 (Wiesner double spreads 9-10). There is neither a physical entity that narrates a story world, nor is there a conscious mind that tells what is happening. David Wiesner, like many other authors of unnatural fiction, thereby, breaks with the rules that structure communication, which typically involve a source of narration and an audience (Nielsen 299).

It has to be mentioned, however, that Nielsen's theory of non-communication is applied in children's literature only to a minimal extent. The majority of picture books analyzed in this study include either an author who communicates to the audience or characters that act as agents in telling something to the audience. Nevertheless, Nielsen's theories do apply to the corpus of unnatural narratology, which exceeds the scope of children's literature.

Besides the aforementioned characteristics, unnatural narratives also tend to manipulate ontological states. For example, a person who is killed but does not die, and such a character does probably exist in the vast field of unnatural narratives, is counterontological (Zunshine 67). As a matter of fact, all life forms that are part of the physical space of the real world die upon killing and no instance of return after death is known in the world of science to date (Zunshine 67). A person who is killed but does not die represents an ontological contradiction, as one cannot be killed and not be dead. That fictional person is, therefore, an unnatural character whose actualization is impossible in the real world (Alber 3). Consequently, the unnatural transforms the ontology, but not exclusively the ontology, of entities to a degree that they cannot be actualized in the real world governed by the laws of physics and logic (Alber 3).

Counterontological entities are also frequently employed as narrative voices in unnatural narratology. Non-human narrators, such as speaking pigs and book eating boys, resist conventional conceptualization (Bernaerts et. al. 68-9). On the one hand, these unnatural narrative voices prompt the reader to project human cognition onto objects, entities, and creatures that generally do not exhibit human-like mental behavior (Bernaerts et. al. 69). On the other hand, the viewer cannot disregard the

"otherness" of these narrators (Bernaerts et. al. 69). Consequently, the unnatural narrator and the natural reader are connected in a somewhat binary manner.

The functions of unnatural, non-human narration vary from case to case. Bernearts et. al. argue that instances of object or animal narration may be used as a satiric narratological strategy (70). Furthermore, non-human narrative voices can serve a didactic or ethical purpose, since they highlight the problematic relationship between human beings and their environment (Bernearts et. al. 70). In Anthony Browne's *Little Beauty* (2008) the gorilla protagonist, who lives in a zoo, signs "I…want…a friend" (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spread 5) which may prompt the reader to consider the effects of solitary confinement on animal psyche. In *Voices in the Park* (1998) the viewer can reflect upon the dreariness of modern working life in the gestures and facial expressions of numerous animal narrators – the satirical effect cannot be overlooked. These unnatural narrators enforce the imposition of human experience onto non-human entities, as "the reader may be invited to consider important aspects of human existence, including the artificial nature of fiction itself" (Berneaerts et. al. 74). Thereby, these "posthuman" narrators encourage the readers to question their own existence and reality as a whole (Bernearts et. al. 75).

Ultimately, unnatural phenomena and entities are narrative impossibilities (Alber 25). These may affect different levels of a story world, the relation between author, narrator, and audience, ontology, and narration itself. Effects that the unnatural causes in the said domains range from the fragmentation of conceptualization and communication to didactic and satirical purposes. Various realizations of unnatural impossibilities can be found in children's picture books.

2.1. Natural narratives and the unnatural

The analyses conducted in the previous chapter indicate that unnatural literature is somehow constructed on the basis of opposites. It can thus be inferred that the unnatural in literature is dependent onto the natural. The relation between the natural and the unnatural is similar to the relation between the ontological and the counterontological, as one implies the other, that is to say, "the notion of violation implies that there is a certain rule that can be violated" (Zunshine 67). Consequently,

the unnatural can only be identified and recognized in relation to the natural and its meaning derives directly from the latter (Alber et. al. 373-4).

The natural encompasses the world we live in. More accurately, it encompasses cognitive frameworks structuring the world (Alber 26). These frames contain knowledge about space, time, human beings and animal species that inhabit our planet (Alber 26). Human beings process their surroundings via such "natural" scripts and these scripts adhere to the laws of logics and physics (Alber 26). According to natural cognitive frames, we know that monkeys cannot speak, that people die when being killed, and that time does not run backwards, even though we would wish it did sometimes (Alber 26). However, we do not access the world solely via natural scripts and frames (Alber 26-7). These natural frames simply comply with the physical and logical laws about space, time, and other living creatures (Alber 27). They are a convenient way to process information provided by our environment (Alber 27).

Regarding literature, natural cognitive frames are frequently represented in realist narratives, narratives that are not only a "representation of a series of events" (Onega and García Landa 5) but an accurate and authentic representation of reality (Alber 27). These narratives tend to have different degrees of complexity (Onega and García Landa 5-6). Nevertheless, while complexity in realist, natural narratives may vary, their story world is usually quite firmly fixed and contains information "about human beings who go through experiences that could also happen to us in the real world" (Alber 27). Furthermore, the realist narrative is natural because it exhibits a coherent, interrelated relation between fabula and sujet, in other words, between story and discourse (Richardson 25). Ultimately, realist literature conducts narrativization of experience to impose order and perspective onto a series of events (Onega and García Landa 4).

Herman has recently extended classification models of narratives in order to include so-called prototypical narratives (14). The scholar proposes a model for categorizing such prototypes based on four primary features: "(i) situatedness, (ii) event sequencing, (iii) worldmaking/world disruption, and (iv) what it's like" (Herman 9).

Situatedness refers to the nature of narrative representations to be embedded in specific contexts of discourse and telling (Herman 17). Hence, a narrative is situated in a communicative context that strongly resembles real-life (Herman 17).

Event sequencing describes the temporal profile that narratives exhibit (Herman 18). In narratives characters are faced with decision-making at temporal turning points of a storyline which leads to consequences that affect the narrative as a whole (Herman 19). From this structure the reader can infer a linear time-course relation (Herman 19).

However, a narrative is more than just temporal sequencing of events (Herman 19). Herman terms this aspect "worldmaking/ world disruption" (19), as events in the narrative cause disorder and confusion in the story world (Herman 19-20). Thus, narratives can be categorized as "a cognitive and communicative strategy for navigating the gap, in everyday experience, between what was expected and what actually takes place" (Herman 20). Additionally, Herman posits that narratives are a sense-making frame for why people act the way they act or why they do not (20).

Herman's "what it's like" refers to the fact that "stories represent – and perhaps make it possible to experience – what it is like to undergo events within a storyworld-in-flux" (Herman 21). According to Herman, a narrative is firmly rooted in lived experience and needs to noticeably encode narrative events onto the human mind in order to remain amenable (Herman 21). Such a prototypical narrative is concerned with "what it's like" for something or somebody to experience a physical or mental event in a particular manner (Herman 35).

The way Herman argues is rather cryptic and his theories essentially indicate that prototypical narratives represent "what it is like for a narrator or characters to undergo certain experiences within the temporal and spatial frames of a storyworld" (Alber 35). Unnatural narratives, however, tend to tamper with parameters of prototypical narratives, such as narration, characters, space, and time (Alber 36). Most unnatural narratives alter only a limited number of these features, as too many unnatural phenomena would cause disorientation and render cognitive processing of a text impossible (Alber 36). Hence, the unnatural can be conceptualized by the reader because of his or her implicit knowledge about the natural or the prototypical.

Besides the definition of the unnatural in relation to the natural or the prototypical, there are theories that classify unnatural narratives on the basis of the mimetic or anti-mimetic nature of a text. Narrative theory differentiates between the mimetic nature of a text in the Aristotelian sense where a narrative's prime function is imitation, simulation, and projection of the real world, and anti-mimetic texts in Plato's sense where the narrative is characterized by artificiality; it differs from the actual perception of life and the world (Richardson 30). The unnatural can be classified as anti-mimetic, since it does not attempt to reproduce the actual world (Alber 28). It represents impossibilities and contradiction that cannot be actualized according to the physical, logical, and human parameters governing the world (Alber 28). Furthermore, the unnatural does not only *not* reproduce or imitate the real world but transcends it (Alber et. al. 378). However, the unnatural can also follow the principles of Aristotelian mimesis, as impossibility can de facto be described and depicted in fiction (Alber 28). Alber elaborates on the latter theory in the following manner:

> [T]he unnatural is only anti-mimetic in the sense of Plato because physically, logically, or humanly impossible scenarios and events are clearly not imitations of the world as we know it; on the other hand, the unnatural is mimetic in the sense of Aristotle because impossibilities can be represented in the world of fiction. (*Unnatural Narratology* 450)

In the said Aristotelean approaches to mimesis, fictional entities represent actual ones (Doležel 6). Tolstoy's description of Napoleon, for example, is a fictional representation of the actual historical figure of Napoleon (Doležel 6). Nevertheless, the appliance of such realist approaches to fiction becomes problematic upon encountering entities that have no actual counterpart, such as Hamlet (Doležel 7). There simply is no actual Hamlet (Doležel 7). Mimetic theory, therefore, argues that Hamlet is a representation of an "actual universal" (Doležel 7). That is to say, Hamlet is a concept which encompasses sociological, historical, psychological, cultural, and numerous additional *actual* categories (Doležel 7). According to mimetic classification models of fiction, the reading rabbit in Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005) too would be a combination of various actual universals (see fig. 1).
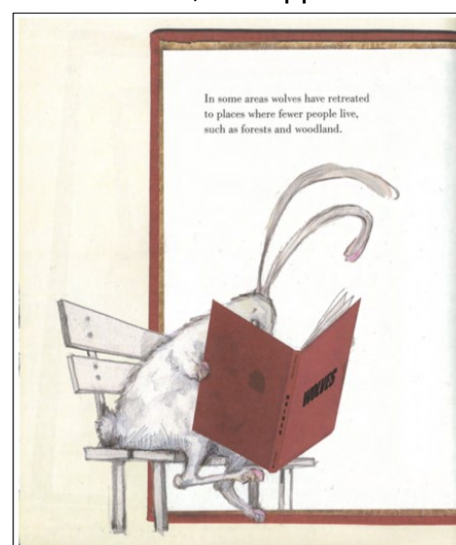
Figure 1: Rabbit in three spaces (from: Wolves double spread 9)

Concerning such mimetic classification, Richardson distinguishes further between mimetic, anti-mimetic, *and* non-mimetic narratives (31). Works like Anna Karenina, for instance, are mimetic, since they produce a narrative containing events and characters from the real world (Richardson 31). Fairy tales, on the other hand, are non-mimetic, as they do not reproduce the real world (Richardson 31).

Even though Richardson provides illustrative examples for the classification of narratives, categorization with regard to mimetic nature is highly complex due to the fact that some genres are wrongfully perceived as being unnatural (Richardson 31). Classical science fiction serves as a prime example (Richardson 31). Like the genre of fairy tales, it attempts to create realistic story worlds that may occur at one point in the future (Richardson 31). The mimetic nature of such texts and their close ties to reality cannot be overlooked (Richardson 31). Postmodern science fiction, in contrast, produces logically impossible and anti-realist story worlds (Richardson 31). Ergo, such narratives are anti-mimetic and unnatural. Ultimately, Richardson's theories show that the relation between mimetic, non-mimetic and anti-mimetic modes of representation is also one of dependency, as the concept of anti-mimesis implies the violation of mimesis (Zunshine 67).

It can be summarized that the unnatural is to some degree dependent on its narrative counterpart in a dialectical manner (Richardson 33). A solely unnatural text would probably not raise the audience's interest (Richardson 33). In addition, the natural and the unnatural or the prototypical and the unnatural should not be seen as binary opposites, since they are simply different modes of representation (Alber 28). Further classification schemes of the unnatural include distinctions between mimetic, non-mimetic and anti-mimetic narratives. These categorization models also show that the natural and the unnatural are interrelated, as one concept is dependent on the other. Via this interaction, unnatural narratives eventually challenge established narratological frameworks (Alber et. al., *Unnatural Narratives* 116).

2.2. Conventionalization, violation, and degrees of unnaturalness

Considering mimetic classification models of unnatural narratives, Klauk and Köppe remark that the proposition that unnatural narratives are anti-mimetic is inaccurate and

potentially classifies all forms of narrative as unnatural (79). They explain their argument in the following example: "Cicero was never the emperor of Rome. Therefore, any story in which Cicero becomes emperor should be counted unnatural" (Klauk and Köppe 83). However, Klauk and Köppe do conduct a mistake by citing this example. The passage is non-mimetic *not* anti-mimetic. It does not try to reproduce the world but it also does not try to transcend it, and so far, unnaturalists have not claimed that non-mimetic text are ipso facto unnatural narratives.

Nevertheless, Klauk and Köppe raise an important point about the definition of the unnatural by their remark: categorizing the unnatural solely on the basis of its relation to the natural or via its mimetic, non-mimetic or anti-mimetic nature is problematic, as it potentially classifies numerous narratives as unnatural (79). Richardson, therefore, proposes a further model for defining the unnatural. According to Richardson,

> an unnatural narrative is one that conspicuously violates conventions of standard narrative forms, in particular the conventions of nonfictional narratives, oral or written, and fictional modes like realism that model themselves on nonfictional narratives. Unnatural narratives furthermore follow fluid, changing conventions and create new narratological patterns in each work. In a phrase, unnatural narratives produce a defamilarization of the basic elements of a narrative. (34)

Ergo, an unnatural narrative may be mimetic, non-mimetic, or anti-mimetic, may contain different amounts of natural elements, as long as it violates, ignores, or transforms literary convention, it can be classified as unnatural (Richardson 34). It can, however, be assumed that most unnatural narratives remain anti-mimetic (Richardson 34). This interpretation can be affirmed by the nature of anti-mimesis which intentionally *does not* imitate the real world (Alber 28) and is more likely to alter convention (Richardson 34).

Being unconventional and introducing new ideas that inevitably change literary history is, therefore, a key feature of the unnatural (Richardson 34). Texts that violate concepts of human experience, such as communication frameworks or unidirectionality of time, are prime examples of unnatural narratives (Richardson 35). The degree of unnaturalness within such narratives may vary depending on how many of these unnatural features are adopted into a text (Biwu 175). If a narrative consists of many unnatural, estranging elements, it is more likely to be classified as belonging to the corpus of unnatural narratology (Biwu 175).

The concept of "conventionalization" complements Richardson's categorization model (Alber et. al. 397). As a matter of fact, new literary inventions may quickly fossilize, such as open endings, or interior monologues, which once revolutionized literary history but are nowadays regarded as clichéd features (Richardson 34). There is no single rule as to why some phenomena, characters, and entities are conventionalized, while others are not (Alber et. al. 373). Nevertheless, there is a tendency to conventionalize features which are used frequently, such as omniscient narration, speaking animals, or simultaneous narration (Alber et. al. 379). These literary devices are not categorized as unnatural elements any longer, according to Richardson's classification scheme (34).

Richardson further postulates that there are pseudo-unnatural narratives which appear to be unnatural to unexperienced readers who do not recognize the universal, pre-determined structures and conventions that govern these narratives (37). Examples are fantasy narratives which usually follow universal patterns (Richardson 32). Animal fables are also pseudo-unnatural narratives, due to the fact that they are widespread in different cultures and often adhere to universal structures (Richardson 34). Thus, these narratives do not fulfill the necessary requirements of unconventionality and defamiliarization in order to be categorized as unnatural literature (Richardson 32).

Nevertheless, classification in reference to the model of conventionalization may be problematic. Such a case is shown in Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" (1915), where the reader is faced with the unresolvable phenomenon of a bug, which has a human mind, that is placed in a story world resembling real life (Alber et. al. 373). Here, the dialectal relation between natural and unnatural increases the strangeness and thereby the unnatural effect of the text, while the speaking animal itself has been conventionalized (Richardson 33).

Opposing Richardson, Alber categorizes *all* impossible entities and phenomena as unnatural disregarding whether they have been conventionalized or not (42). Cognitively speaking, this argument is highly plausible because the unnatural has always been an elementary part of human thinking (Alber 40). For example, in the Middle Ages many people believed in supernatural creatures or magic (Alber 40).

People were even burned at the stake for bonding with the unnatural, the devil for example (Alber 40). While nowadays a supernatural being, such as the devil, is highly conventionalized and would hardly strike even the most conservative reader as strange, the people of the Middle Ages did not consider devils, daemons or speaking animals to be conventional at all (Alber 40-1). The example shows that unnatural phenomena are a pervasive feature of human cognition. To oppose this classification model means to ignore the fact that the persistence of unnatural phenomena in literature may reveal information about the development of human cognition (Zunshine 53).

As a result, it can be summarized that there are different categorization models of the unnatural. While Richardson, classifies strange and unconventional literature as unnatural (34), Alber proposes that even conventionalized impossibilities can be regarded as unnatural (42). Even though Klauk and Köppe oppose the latter model (79), Alber's analysis framework permits an investigation of the persistence of unnatural phenomena among various centuries. Furthermore, it enables literary scientists to examine the development of human cognition in relation to different historical periods.

2.3. Making sense of the unnatural

The preceding chapters have presented the most common modes of occurrence of the unnatural and provided classification models for unnatural phenomena in literature. However, it has not been stated yet how readers engage with the unnatural on the level of cognitive processing.

In general, unnatural elements in literature create an imbalance in narrative perception which causes cognitive disorientation (Alber 44). Concerning the processing of such unnatural scenarios, some readers simply accept states of narrative imbalance, while others attempt to decode the unnatural in order to restore order in the story world (Alber 44). According to Alber, most readers actively try to decipher unnatural conundrums (44).

As a matter of fact, unnatural impossibilities tend to prompt the reader to extend his or her cognitive capabilities, as the imagination of possibilities that cannot be actualized

in the real world is enforced (Alber, *Unnatural Narratology* 455). Even though such unnatural impossibilities challenge cognitive processing (Alber, *Unnatural Narratology* 455), they do not leave the reader paralyzed, as it is claimed by Eco (77). Eventually, the unnatural triggers "the mind's power produce imaginary things" (Alber, *Unnatural Narratology* 455).

Alber, therefore, proposes different reading strategies that can be applied in order to make unnatural literature more readable (45). Most of these strategies involve an extension of "preexisting cognitive frames and scripts beyond real-world possibilities to reconstruct impossible scenarios or events" (Alber 45). Moreover, Alber's reading strategies include both world and meaning-making via cognitive reconstruction or interpretation (Alber 55). The appliance of these reading strategies is covert and triggered by unconscious incentives (Alber 55). Alber's cognitive reading strategies are the following:

In the "blending of frames" approach, readers engage in mapping operations of different cognitive concepts to create balance in unnatural narratives (Alber 48). Hence, an unnatural phenomenon is explained on the basis of preexisting real-world knowledge. These theories about blending will be analyzed in greater detail in chapter 3.

When readers "generify" they ascribe unnatural elements to a specific genre (Alber 50). Thereby, an unnatural scenario is embedded into a familiar and supportive context which helps readers to cope with imbalanced and impossible features of a narrative (Alber 50). For example, the talking animals in David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001) and Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005) can be made sense of in the context of the genre of children's literature.

Readers may also conduct "subjectification", that is to say, explain the unnatural as being a part of an internal state, such as a fantasy, vision, dream, or hallucination (Alber 51). The wordless picture book *Flotsam* (2006) may be "subjectified". It includes a fantasy underwater world, where octopuses read to other fish, where blowfish conduct balloon rides, where turtles carry entire cities on their shells, where sea horses

are worshipped by aliens, and where starfishes are islands (Wiesner, *Flotsam* double spreads 8-10).

When readers do not try to dissolve the unnatural but attempt to read it as a representation of a specific theme, they "foreground the thematic" (Alber 51). As has been outlined in section 1, the gorilla and his cat friend in Anthony Browne's *Little Beauty* (2008) may be conceptualized as a general theme about animal entrapment in zoos.

Unnatural scenarios may also be interpreted as allegories that reveal information about the human condition (Alber 52). Alber calls this approach "reading allegorically" (52). Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* (1998), which stars various human-like monkeys, could be read as such an allegory. Be it a frightful mother, a sad worker or two shy children, *Voices in the Park* (1998) conveys information about the human condition and the world we live in.

In a similar manner, the unnatural may be perceived as distortion or exaggeration (Alber 52). In this case readers interpret an unnatural narrative as satire or parody (Alber 52). Oliver Jeffer's book eating Henry in *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006) is definitely an unnatural satire on parental advice about reading and nutrition. The protagonist Henry, at first, eats numerous books and gets smarter and smarter (Jeffers double spread 6). However, all of a sudden he loses his intellect (Jeffers double spread 11). Eventually, he starts *reading* books instead and *eating* broccoli (Jeffers double spread16).

Impossibilities and contradiction can also be explained in relation to transcendental states (Alber 53). Consequently, the reader classifies the unnatural as belonging to supernatural spheres, such as heaven or hell (Alber 53). This theory applies only marginally to the analyzed children's literature because most of the story worlds evoked by these picture books are fantasy worlds rather than transcendental worlds.

In the "do it yourself" approach readers simply regard the narrative as "a construction kit or collage that invites free play with its elements" (Alber 53). That is to say, the reader reconstructs the story based on the narrative material represented in the story

world. This approach can be used when reading Lynne Cherry's *The Armadillo from Amarillo* (1994). In this picture book the reader can construct the story either via text provided by an omniscient narrator or via letters that the protagonist Sasparillo wrote (Cherry double spread 6).

Eventually, readers can apply "the Zen way of reading" (Alber 54). In this approach the reader stoically accepts the strangeness of unnatural scenarios and all emotions that these scenarios evoke (Alber 54). This reading strategy can be used in processing Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005) which is highly complex, consists of an impossible story world, multiple endings, and numerous frame breaks.

Ultimately, readers may make sense of or interpret the unnatural on the basis of the aforesaid reading strategies. However, readers are usually unaware of the reading strategies that they apply (Alber 55). As has been outlined in the introduction, this research will investigate cognitive approaches to the unnatural and the creation of possible worlds. These theories partially overlap with Alber's "blending of frames" and "do it yourself".

3. Cognitive approaches to the unnatural

Cognitive approaches to literature are essentially concerned with the question about how readers process and perceive a text on the level of cognition (Fludernik 2). These approaches have introduced concepts from other scientific disciplines, such as framing, fore- and backgrounding, as well as primacy- and recency effects to the study of literature (Fludernik 2). The core argument of cognitive literary theorists is that "the way we write or read reflects features of our cognitive predispositions, or can be explained by resorting to an analysis of the mind" (Fludernik 3). Furthermore, cognitive approaches to narratology pose the question whether cognitive parameters, which are essentially real-world parameters, have changed over time, and whether this phenomenon can be related to the study of literature which is full of surreal and unnatural elements (Alber 39).

Cognitive approaches to literature are, consequently, closely connected to unnatural narratology due to the questions that the latter poses about unnatural phenomena.

Besides the enquiry of how to deal with impossibility and contradiction in literature, or what the unnatural can tell us about the development of human cognition, Alber et. al. raise the query "whether the unnatural is ultimately a function of our bodily existence in the world […] or whether the unnatural lies beyond the scope of our embodiment" (375-76). To these questions, cognitive approaches to literature offer interesting and promising answers.

The most fundamental hypothesis of cognitive theories is that human beings are able to categorize entities into domains such as 'animals', 'plants', 'artifacts', et cetera, enabling them to infer what is considered "normal" in the given domain on the basis of cognitive frames (Zunshine 63). It is considered normal that cats hiss when they are angry, due to predetermined cognitive, culturally-shaped parameters (Zushine 63). A cat can be classified as an animal according to such cognitive frames, and within the domain of 'animals' hissing is associated with anger (at least in relation to cats) (Zunshine 63). Nevertheless, some entities resist human categorization into one cognitive domain (Zunshine 66). A cyborg in a work of science fiction may be conceptualized based on the cognitive concept of 'human', while its robot-half classifies as an 'artifact' (Zunshine 66). The cyborg example shows "that events and entities that violate our intuitive ontological expectations are never fully assimilated by any one ontological category" (Zunshine 66). The cyborg cannot be classified as *either* a human *or* an artifact, whereby it remains open to sense making and new interpretations (Zunshine 66). Consequently, new cognitive frames may emerge (Fludernik 15). This process is termed "frame enrichment" (Klauk and Köppe 89).

Contradicting unnaturalists, Klauk and Köppe insist that unnatural phenomena do not necessarily lead to frame enrichment (89). They provide a somewhat questionable example to prove their argument:

> Suppose you read a fictional story where people walk off without paying and no one cares. Only the most naive reader who is unacquainted with the basic rules of dealing with fiction would consequently engage in a process of "frame enrichment" and change what he or she believes typically happens in restaurants. (Klauk and Köppe 89)

Klauk and Köppe make several mistakes here: A) The scenario that they describe is not unnatural, since it is not impossible with regard to physical, logical, and human laws – it is simply unlikely to happen. B) For some people it may be "normal" to leave

a restaurant without paying and for others it may be "normal" not to care about it, ergo, there is no frame enrichment. Nevertheless, unnatural phenomena *can* lead to frame enrichment. For instance, in the natural literary scenario of a man being murdered, all emotional reactions are inevitably tied to the quite certain ontological premise that death is final and that dead people do not return from death (Zunshine 69). However, if the aforesaid man were to be dead for a couple of days and were to return afterwards the emotional experiences for this unnatural ontological violation may differ (Zunshine 69). Zunshine summarizes numerous possible scenarios, as follows:

> Will his family members still feel grief mingled with anger, or desire for revenge, or fear? Or will they experience half grief-half joy? Or mostly joy? Or joy mixed with desire for revenge? Would the murderer be sentenced to die, or would he be sentenced to die in the same strange way, so that he too could come back in three days? Or would he be publicly commended for committing the act of murder and thus making it possible for his victim to come back in such a glorious fashion? And can we really call the murderer a victim in this case? And is he really a man, given that he managed what no other human being ever did? (Zunshine 69)

Ultimately, Zunshine humorously illustrates that whenever a truly unnatural phenomenon arises, that is to say, whenever a narrative exhibits impossibility or contraction, frame enrichment seems to thrive (Zunshine 69).

3.1. Segregationists, internal approaches, blending, and the theory of minds

In order to explain unnatural conundrums, Fludernik proposes a four-level cognitive model to the perception and production of a narrative that readers use to naturalize entities that cannot be categorized into real-world cognitive domains (14). Level I of the said model contains the most elemental cognitive frames which human beings access in order to explain everyday-reality (Fludernik 14). Level II consists of narrative frames such as "TELLING, VIEWING, EXPERIENCING, REFLECTING and ACTING" (Fludernik 15). Level III relates to cognitive prototypes that influence literary perception, such as unreliable- or authorial narration (Fludernik 15). Level IV is the level of naturalization where "readers actively interpret the text in hand as a narrative by resorting to frames from the other three levels" (Fludernik 15). Thus, readers simply blend "natural" cognitive parameters in order to naturalize the unnatural – this theory is called blending theory (Fludernik 15). For example, the frame of the *omniscient narrator* relies on a blend between the concepts of a human narrator and divine or superhuman abilities (Fludernik 16). The monkeys in Anthony Browne's *Voices in the*

Park (1998), which exhibit human-like behavior, are a simple blend of the concepts 'human' and 'monkey' – note that some of the animal protagonists in Browne's work literally have human hands (Browne ch. 2).

Fludernik's blending theory relies mainly on research about the Theory of Minds (ToM). In the ToM it is argued that "[t]he reader uses existing or prestored knowledge of other minds in the actual world in order to process the emergent knowledge that is supplied by fictional-mind presentations" (Palmer 175). Consequently, readers require preexisting scripts and frames to process unnatural phenomena and to close narrative gaps in story world construction (Palmer 176). Oliver Jefferson's book eating boy in *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006), who gets smarter with every book he eats, is probably processed on the basis of preexisting scripts about humans, books, and parental advice for children to read as much as possible. Consequently, the comprehension of unnatural narratives is only possible if readers can draw back onto a hypothetical stock of minds from which narrative reconstruction can be conducted (Palmer 177). These minds are "mapped from the source domain (the real mind of the reader and in particular their knowledge of other minds) to the target domain of the storyworld within which the reader perceives the fictional minds to function" (Palmer 176).

Literary scientists like Fludernik and Palmer are essentially segregationists, that is to say, they explain the unnatural in relation to the natural, which leads to the premise that there is no discourse outside the actual world (Pavel 13). Hence, unnatural phenomena exist only in text and *not* in the real world. In addition, Fludernik and Palmer explain unnatural entities in relation to real world knowledge, scripts, and frames. However, several theories show that readers process a text by drawing from the ontological laws that the narrative itself postulates (Pavel 16). Ergo, they do not process the unnatural via real-world cognitive scripts and frames. Such theories are called internal approaches (Pavel 16).

Internal approaches to literature put forward that the reader is immediately faced with a conundrum when he or she encounters a narrative (Pavel 11). On the one hand, the reader somehow seems to know that characters, objects, and entities of the narrative do not exist outside of the pages of the book (Pavel 11). On the other hand, the

narrative evokes some notion of reality – the narrative feels real to some extent (Pavel 11). This paradox is explained by the nature of language which allows reference to entities that cannot be actualized (Pavel 13).

Such a linguistic paradigm is realized in the statement "Rabbit went to the library. He chose a book about… Wolves" (Gravett double spread 3) in Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005) which proposes the existence of a rabbit and that same rabbit went to the library to borrow a book. However, no matter how hard we try, we will not encounter a book-borrowing rabbit in the four-dimensional space-time continuum of the real world (Pavel 14). The statement is, therefore, neither right nor wrong, nor true or false, since there is no book-borrowing rabbit (Pavel 15). Consequently, the sentence is not really about a book-borrowing rabbit, at least when trying to conceptualize the statement according to real-world cognitive parameters (Pavel 15).

Proponents of more conservative one-world frame theories would now argue that, since the aforementioned statement about the rabbit is neither right nor wrong, it is empty because *Wolves* (2005) created an entity that does not exist (Doležel 2-3). Using the discourse of the actual world as a sense-making model, the reference to the book borrowing-rabbit is *senseless* as it simply does not refer to anything (Doležel 4). However, human beings can de facto conceptualize fiction without reference (Doležel 4). They can make sense of unnatural creatures, such as Godzilla, just as much as they can make sense of animals that exhibit human behavior in picture books. Readers may actually tend to conceptualize these unnatural entities *text-internally* and not according to the rules that govern the actual world (Pavel 16).

As a matter of fact, in the analysis of the unnatural it is a redundant endeavor to draw a sharp line between the fictional and the non-fictional, as attempted in explanatory models by Fludernik (blending theory) or Palmer (ToM). Pavel illustrates this theoretical fallacy in *Fictional Worlds* as follows: "In *War and Peace* is Natasha less actual than Napoleon? Fictional texts enjoy a certain discursive unity; for their readers, the worlds they describe are not necessarily fractured along a fictive/actual line" (16). Hence, while segregationist thinkers postulate that existence is restricted to material objects, externalists propose the opposite (Noonan 16-17). Fictional events are *de*

facto part of the real world and can even influence human behavior. These fictions manifest themselves in the form of dreams, psyche (Pavel 50), *and* in literature.

Externalist philosophy further postulates that identity statements can only be determined as true *a posteriori* (Noonan 15). That is to say, if the reader encounters numerous speaking animals in David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001) it is only *a posteriori* that they can be classified as real or non-real (Noonan 15). Thus, *before* reader evaluation the existence of speaking animals remains a possibility.

Summarizing the abovementioned philosophical theories, it can be concluded that there are two major schools in cognitive approaches to the unnatural. Segregationists proclaim that the unnatural can only be made sense of via the natural and that it stems from real-world blends. Externalists and internal approaches to literature posit that there is discourse outside of the actual world and that existence can also be realized in fictional modes. This thesis will apply the latter approach to picture book studies. Ultimately, it seems more reasonable that the reader decides whether to assess the existence of unnatural entities according to the ontological laws that the fiction itself evokes.

3.2. How impossible is the impossible?

Before investigating how unnatural phenomena can be conceptualized text-internally, the classification of the unnatural itself must be critically examined. Alber defines his notion of impossibility in opposition to what is known to be possible in the real world, according to physics and logic (25). Nevertheless, Klauk and Köppe have rightfully criticized Alber for this definition, as they postulate: "real-world knowledge as opposed to what? […] our knowledge about fiction may turn out to be knowledge about the real world as well" (89). As a matter of fact, Alber remains rather vague in his categorization of the impossible in relation to the real-world. As specified by Alber, the impossible is related to the reader's notion of a rational and empirical mind-set (38). In addition, Alber's classification of the impossible entails that it is *only* possible in imagination and not in the actual world itself (38). Nevertheless, rationality is a fuzzy concept and there is impossibility that is actualized in our world.

Essentially, Alber commits the fallacy of "restricted speaking" in his definition of the unnatural, which occurs when we classify one set of things and entities as worldly and another set of things and entities as non-worldly, then "we quantify over less than all there is" (Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* 3). For example, when a speaker says that all the beer is stored in the refrigerator, that person ignores most of the beer that exists (Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* 3). In the words of modal logic, "other" things exist *simpliciter*, we just tend to ignore them or quantify them (Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* 3).

The example of the speaker talking about beer is a rather simple one. However, there are other representative cases where we quantify over alternatives: Alber proposes that anything that violates the laws of physics is unnatural (25). This proposition includes the law of non-contradiction (LNC), which basically posits that no statement can be both true *and* false simultaneously (Priest 416). Furthermore, a meaningful statement always has to exclude something, thus, "a claim that rules out nothing, says nothing" (Priest 418). This assumption is, however, wrong, as Priest illustrates: "Merely consider the claim 'Everything is true'. This rules nothing out: it entails everything. Yet it is quite meaningful (it is, after all, false)" (418). Hence, the LNC is not as stable a variable, as Alber considers it to be.

Another argument made by the LNC is that something is true only if its opposite is not true – in philosophical terms this argument reads as follows: "-α is true if and only if α is not true" (Priest 418). Analyzing a famous philosophical conundrum: the philosopher Socrates can never be seated and not seated at the same time, as this would constitute a contradiction of the LNC (Priest 418). However, Socrates may be considered to be in both states of sitting and not sitting, when he rises (Priest 418). This philosophical experiment also applies to literature. In Meg McKinlay's and Leila Rudge's *No Bears* (2011) it is explicitly stated that there are "No

Figure 2: Contradiction (from: No Bears double spread 8)

Bears. Not even one" (McKinlay and Leila Rudge double spread 6). However, the story

world consists of a bear and, moreover, it can intervene in the action of the narrated plot, even though it is deliberately excluded from that story world by the narrator. Like Socrates, the bear is in two ontological states at the same time: it is *literally* outside the narrative, as indicated by the edges of the book within the book, and at the same time it is in the narrative, as it intervenes in its story (see fig. 2). Maybe the bear can be considered in- *and* outside of the story world when it intervenes in the action of the narrative which is narrated by Ruby. The example illustrates that the knowledge we may have about fiction does not necessarily have to be different from the knowledge we have about the "real" world and that the LNC is less stable than one might expect.

More examples show that impossibility is not necessarily *not* part of the real world. A whole school of thought called Dialethism posits that there are some contradictions within the logical space that human beings inhabit that are true (Priest, *In Contradiction* 53). This theory argues that truth per se is not a concrete concept, as there is a fundamental difference in saying that something is true and knowing that something is true (Priest, *In Contradiction* 53-4). Thus, to argue that the "real" world is free of contradiction would render the work of various philosophers that contributed to Dialethism futile. Even in the discipline of physics, there are theorists who question the laws that their own scientific community established (Ryan 636).

Figure 3: Schrödinger's paradox (from: This book just ate my dog! double spread 4)

The most famous example about how possible the impossible may be is probably the paradox of Schrödinger's cat: A cat is put into a box and so is one atom of uranium which has a 50% chance to decay during a certain time interval (Ryan 638). If it does

decay, a mechanism in the box will be set off that kills the cat (Ryan 638). Before an observer opens the box, the uranium will have decayed *and* not decayed – both scenarios may occur – leaving the cat in the state of being dead *and* alive before the box is opened (Ryan 638-39). One solution to the problem is to consider the cat dead in one universe and alive in another, while it is watched by copies of the same observer in these universes or by no observer at all (Ryan 639). In a similar fashion, Bella's dog in Richard Byrne's *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* can be considered to exist to 50% in one world and to 50% in another world. In the world where the reader cannot see it, it may be watched by a copy of the reader or may not be watched at all (see fig. 3).

The abovementioned examples were neither used to indicate that the unnatural does not exist, nor to remark that Alber's definition of the unnatural is wrong. Quite on the contrary, there are definitely unnatural, impossible phenomena that cannot be explained at all – the speaking pigs in David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001) are a prime example. However, the examples show that it is difficult to draw a sharp line between the knowledge about fiction and the knowledge about the world, and that impossibilities may be more possible than initially expected. Furthermore, the analyses conducted in this chapter support internal approaches to literature, as it is difficult to draw clear distinctions between real-world possibilities and unreal impossibilities, and between fiction and non-fiction. Eventually, "[w]e have only to believe in the vast realm of *possibilia*, and there we find what we need to advance our endeavours" (Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* 4).

3.3.   The Possible Worlds Theory

The preceding chapter briefly mentioned a theoretical model that can be used to dissolve ontological paradoxes and binary propositions. In the conundrum of Schrödinger's cat, it has been argued that the cat can be considered dead in one world and alive in another. The same cognitive pattern has been applied to Bella's dog in *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* (2014). This explanatory model is called Possible Worlds Theory (PWT), which is a philosophical approach that enables an analysis of the intricate reality-fiction relationship in literary studies (Ronan 6). Ultimately, PWT tries to answer the question about how readers comprehend a text to the extent that they actually "enter" the story world (Palmer 33-4).

PWT is part of possibilism, a contrasting theory to actualism. In actualism the actual world is a core explanatory model for everything that is possible and everything that is actual (Doležel 13). Thus, the actual is actual and everything else is different. However, such models can only identify the source of the unnatural but they cannot explain the unnatural per se (Doležel 9). Blending theory, for instance, can tell us that the reading rabbit in *Wolves* (2005) is a compound of the cognitive frames about reading, human behavior, and animals but it does not explain the reading rabbit itself. In possibilism the actual does not necessarily ontologically differ from the possible (Doležel 13). This means that the unnatural is not actual in a physical sense and can, therefore, not be explained via actualism – it can only be explained via what is possible, which encompasses cognitive approaches like PWT.

PWT also owes much of its legitimacy to the discipline of physics which provides two fundamental hypotheses to the concept of possible worlds: A) space is not limited but infinite, B) matter exists also outside the observable universe (Ryan 635). If space is unlimited and if matter exists outside the observable space we inhabit, it can be assumed that there is a good chance that the combination of particles that structures our universe is realized somewhere else as well, and that the inhabitants of our universe exist as copies or counterparts somewhere else too (Ryan 635). They exist in possible worlds.

As can been seen from the physical notion of possible worlds, these alternative worlds are somehow related to an actual world. The same notion also applies to PWT in literary studies due to the assumption that the possibility of alternative state of affairs in one world is inevitably bound to an actual world which serves as a reference model (Ronan 49). Ryan postulates that possible and actual worlds are part of the same system, which is located in continual logical space, and everything that is merely possible is rooted to the actual (49-50). This theory implies that possible worlds follow the same laws as actual ones.

With regard to the latter claim, the views among scientists actually diverge. According to Ryan, if a world is to receive the status of "possibility", it must be related to the center of the narrative via accessibility (Ryan 645). That is to say, a world is only possible if it can be accessed from the world that is placed at the center of the system in which

actual and possible worlds are located (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 31). Accessibility is *only* given if the possible world does not breach the LNC and the excluded middle (645). Ergo, the possible world must remain free of contraction. However, a world without any contradiction seems to be *more* implausible than a world that contains some contradiction, as has been outlined in chapter 3.2. Moreover, our world consists of "such impossible entities as individual psyches, desires, dreams and symbols" (Pavel 50). If we consider what has been shown by Ronan, namely that the actual world serves as a reference model for possible worlds (49), we can conclude that it does not matter if possible worlds break the LNC, as conversely postulated by Ryan (645). If an actual world is a textual actual[1] world within a fiction and if it consists of some logical impossibilities, its possible alternatives do so too, or, as Doležel illustrates, "[f]ictional worlds do not have to conform to the structures of the actual world, just as the world of non-Euclidean geometry does not conform to the world where Euclidean geometry is valid" (19).

Concerning the rules of these worlds, textual actual *and* possible worlds are part of the same system and include the same roster of individuals and entities (Pavel 44). However, all of these features may undergo changes (Pavel 44). As a matter of fact, disregarding the relations of logic introduces the possibility of contradiction within a possible world (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 33). To
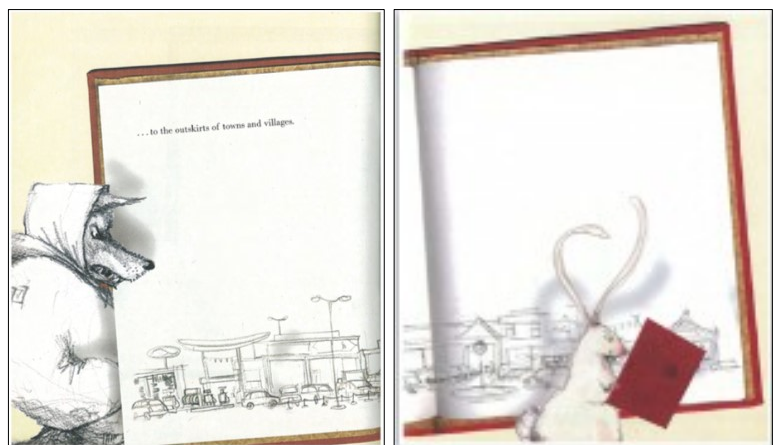
Figure 4: Wolf in three spaces (from: Wolves double spread 8)

illustrate this with an example: the wolf in Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005) exists in three spaces at the same time. It exists in the space of the book that the reader is holding, it exists in the story world that the rabbit inhabits, and it exists in the book that the rabbit is reading (see fig. 4). In the real world, such a spatial setting is impossible. Entities

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[1] In PWT there is a difference between an actual and a textual actual world. The former refers to the reality where the reader is physically located; the latter refers to a narrative reference world where laws governing that world are proposed by the narrative itself (Ronan, *Glossary* vii).

may be in two states at the same time but to be in three states at the same time violates the LNC (Priest 418). However, if we accept the fictional world of the picture book as a textual actual world, then we have learned from the preceding pages of the picture book that entities can be in three worlds simultaneously – it does not matter whether this is a contradiction or not.

Ultimately, the purpose of a possible world that contains such impossibilities is not to simply create a world for its own sake but to say something about the actual world itself (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 48). Counterfactuals in a possible world may reveal how things could have been in the actual world, as Lewis illustrates: "Among my common opinions […] are not only my naive belief in tables and chairs, but also my naive belief that these tables and chairs might have been otherwise arranged" (88). Relating this claim to the field of literary studies, the slide in Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* (1998), which extends into the blank space of possibility, may leave it to the reader to imagine the way things could have been for the frightened monkey-protagonist (see fig. 5).
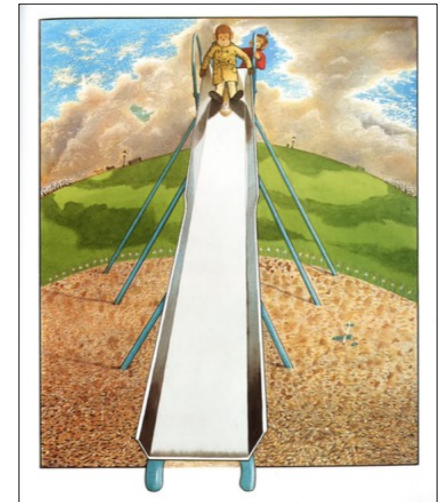
Figure 5: Possible world (from: Voices in the Park ch. 3)

3.3.1. On the relation between actual, textual actual, and possible worlds

Concerning the relation between an actual and a textual actual world, the latter may share similarities with the former in the matter of the inventory of both worlds, chronological compatibility, physical laws, taxonomy, logical and analytical compatibility, and linguistic compatibility (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 31-3). If a text evokes a notion of reality that resembles the actual world in all the said domains, then that sort of narrative creates a realist textual actual world (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 31-3). However, the textual actual world does not have to mimic all the domains of the actual world and it usually differs in at least one of these features from that actual world (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 33). For example, the textual actual world of David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001) differs from the actual world in taxonomic compatibility, since its story world includes species that share different properties than in the actual world

(Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 33), namely, pigs that are able to communicate in human language.

Within the intricate relationship between actual and possible worlds, fiction and reality relate also in another sense. A fictional character may be linked to an actual person by what is called "transworld identity" (Doležel 17). In a possible world Brutus might not have betrayed Cesar, rendering the popular expression "et tu Brute?" obsolete (Doležel 17), and an actual boy named Henry might not eat edible food but books in a possible world, like in Oliver Jeffers *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006). Thus, actual entities that are fictionalized, or solely fictional entities, may be subjected to radical changes in possible worlds (Doležel 17-18). However, they are still related to either an actual or a textual-actual world.

With regard to the existence of such possible worlds, they *do not* differ from actual ones – they may simply be located somewhere else (Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* 2). Concerning this claim Lewis argues: "I do not have the slightest idea what a difference in manner of existence is supposed to be. Some things exist here on earth, other things exist extraterrestrially[sic!], perhaps some exist no place in particular; but that is no difference in manner of existing, merely a difference in location" (Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* 2-3). Consequently, the possible world in *Little Beauty* (2008), where Beauty's fur has a different color and where she is strong enough to break a TV (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spread 15), exists in the same manner as a textual actual world exists; both are different, but they do not differ in existence (Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* 2-3).

In reference to whether alternative worlds in fiction are merely alternative state of affairs in the fictional world itself or whether they are possible worlds of the actual world we inhabit, a final issue must be addressed: that of authorship and creation. Arguing that fiction may be a possible world to the actual world is a problematic inquiry, because such a claim would postulate that fictional worlds and the objects they contain exist independently of their authors (Pavel 48), and, therefore, independently of the actual world. Nevertheless, according to Doležel, "[t]he fictional world cannot be altered or canceled once its creator has fixed the constructing text" (26).

However, a philosophical model that leaves it to the reader to decide whether a fictional world is dependent on its creator may reduce the importance of literary creation to a minimum (Pavel 49). As has been outlined in section 3.1., the reader may not draw a sharp line between fictional and actual when processing a narrative. In addition, many readers do not consciously consider authorship and creation when being immersed into a fictional world (Pavel 49). Eventually, the reader enters a fictional world via imaginative force, that is to say, enters a textual actual world placed in a fictional system that evokes a convincing notion of reality (Ryan 646). The facts presented in such a fiction are not facts in a physical sense, they are, however, rooted in "a complex network of events and states that never take place" (Ryan 647). It is then the narrator in the fiction that asserts legitimacy to these "facts", which need to be accepted by the reader unconditionally (Ryan 649). Provided that the reader can pretend that a literary world exists, then that world *is* an actual world, and there may be various possible worlds attached to it (Ryan 646). Hence, the story world of a fiction is in itself a non-actualized possible world of an actual state of affairs (Doležel 16). Neither are the three pigs in David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001) actual entities of the actual world, nor is the human-like gorilla in Anthony Browne's *Little Beauty* (2008). However, both may be possibilities of an actual world in alternative worlds (Doležel 16).

Concerning the nature of possible worlds, some philosophical theories would posit that possible worlds are sentences that propose possibilities (Lewis 86). As has been argued throughout this paper, possible worlds are ontologically rooted in the actual world – this includes textual actual worlds within narratives – and possible worlds do not differ largely from that actual world. If a textual actual world evoked in fiction is the reference model for a possible world, then that possible world would be a construction of sentences that propose possibilities (Lewis 86). Nonetheless, this would not matter to the reader, as he or she has decided that the fiction is no less actual than the actual world itself (Ryan 646). If the actual world, as a reference model, is the "real" world – the world we inhabit governed by the known laws of physics and logic – then to define a literary possible world as a construction of sentences with different possibility values would entail that the actual world itself is also a construction of sentences (Lewis 86). Nonetheless, we know that neither our surroundings are sentences, and consequently, nor are possible worlds (Lewis 86).

3.3.2. Ontological pluralism and wormhole narratives

The worlds we encounter in literature, like in unnatural picture books, are, *de facto,* fictional and there is little room in arguing about their ontological status, but fiction does not equate to non-actuality – these findings are what this thesis attempted to outline so far. According to theories on ontological pluralism in such a fictional actual world, a narrative is centered around an actual world and at the periphery of this system there are numerous possible worlds that are *not* yet actual (Ryan 644-5). They can only be actualized *a posteriori*, after reading about them (Noonan 15). In David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001) the reader may decide that the animal fable about a wolf attempting to eat three pigs is the textual actual world. All other story worlds that the pigs transgress into may be regarded as possible worlds. These possible worlds are actualized, after, or probably even while reading about them. Thus, a narrative can be seen as a universe that contains multiple distinct worlds (Ryan 644). *A priori* this universe consists of countless possible worlds that we do not know of, since discourse is essentially always incomplete and "[n]o discourse could ever be long enough to say in its story all that could be said about the whole storyworld" (Palmer 34). This is true also *a posteriori*. In Richard Byrne's *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* (2014) we know that Bella vanished into the center of the book but we do not know what her last name is. In fact, such information is meaningless (Doležel 22). It does, however, reveal that a narrative is always incomplete (Doležel 22).

Ryan attempts to map out these possible worlds that we cannot perceive in relation to multiverse cosmology, a theory from the field of physics where worlds are "branches" that must be equal with regard to their ontological status (656). In such a universe characters consciously travel from branch to branch, or world to world, in a physical sense and thereby affect "the history of their own universe" (Ryan 656). In Byrne's *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* (2014) Bella's dog, Ben, the dog rescue, the fire bridge, the police, as well as Bella herself transgress into the center of the book (Byrne double spread 12), a possible world that we cannot see or perceive but only imagine. This possible world is one of the aforementioned branches and action within this branch affects the universe of the characters (Ryan 656), as the inhabitants of that possible world write a letter and send it back to the actual world (Byrne double spread 13).

With regard to the ontological status of this possible world, it may present an incorrect image of the actual world as a reference model within a narrative, since the readers cannot perceive it. However, the characters themselves may assert the ontological status of actuality to that possible world (Ryan 649). As a matter of fact, "[o]ur actual world is only one world among others. We call it alone actual not because it differs in kind from all the rest but because it is the world we inhabit. The inhabitants of other worlds may truly call their own worlds actual if they mean by 'actual' what we do" (Lewis 85-6). Consequently, even if the reader cannot assert whether a possible world is truly possible, the characters can do so.

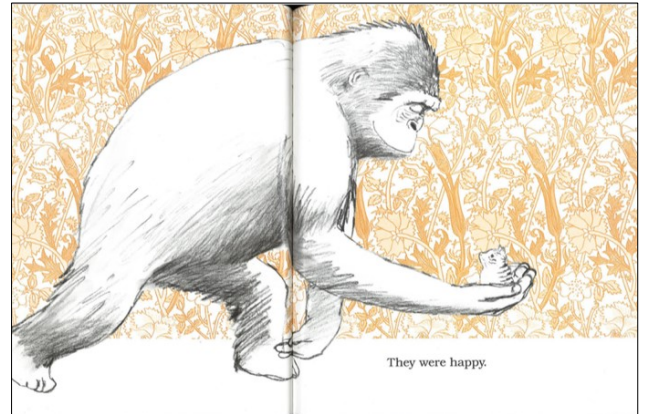Fig. 6: Possible world (from Little Beauty double spread 8)

According to Ryan, one way for characters to stray from one world to another are so called wormhole narratives where travel is enabled via portals – Harry Potter who crosses into an alternate reality at King's Cross is a prime example (657). This notion of world-to-world transition is based on theories from physics and restricts transgression from the actual to the possible to a limited number of narratives (Ryan 659-65). The appliance of the wormhole theory to literature is based on the fallacy of explaining fictional worlds on the basis of real-world knowledge, as outlined in the chapters 3.1. and 3.2.. The characters in postmodern children's picture books do not need a portal or a wormhole, like the gorilla in Browne's *Little Beauty* (2008) who enters an alternate, possible world where the basic ontology in relation to the actual world remains the same, while colors differ (see fig. 6). The characters in unnatural children's literature simply "imagine" and thereby transit between the possible and the actual in any way they want to (Lewis 88).

Ultimately, possible worlds are constructs of imagination, as Lewis shows: "If worlds were creatures of my imagination, I could imagine them to be any way I liked, and could tell you all you wish to hear simply by carrying on my imaginative creation" (88). Consequently, possible worlds are not pre-constructed entities located in transcendental spheres; they are de facto *constructed* by human effort (Doležel 14). In literary studies these possible worlds are not just mental constructs but appear as

concrete manifestations consisting of page, written text, and in the case of unnatural children's literature, illustration (Ronan 60). PWT provides a cognitive framework for coping with such impossible manifestations and contributes fundamentally to the field of unnatural narratology.

4. Postmodernism

The term postmodernism and its postmodern artistic products refer to a wide-spread cultural movement which depicts a contemporary society that is increasingly fractured and globalized (Malpas 1). It is fractured because in the modern world tradition and modernity are in permanent conflict and postmodernism is the driving force "of deregulation, dispersal and disruption as the securities of tradition and community are continually crushed" (Malpas 3). Furthermore, society is globalized due to the fact that postmodern utopias or dystopias reach even the most remote areas of the planet via connectivity (Malpas 1).

With regard to periodization, postmodernism is a cultural product of the 1960s (Malpas 5). However, "postmodernism" only became a pervasive term in Western culture in the 1970s and 1980s (Malpas 5). It is a concept that is connected to ideas about plurality, fracturing, and fragmentation (Malpas 5). In its prosperous years of the 70s and 80s almost all emerging cultural artifacts were ascribed to postmodernism, such as Band Aid or chaos theory (Malpas 5-6).

Concerning cultural classification, postmodernism is a matter of debate among cultural theorists. Jameson argues that postmodernism and its cultural products are ahistorical entities without substance and reference (*Introduction* ix). Consequently, in the postmodern world culture has replaced nature as a reference model of representation (Jameson, *Introduction* x). Culture represents itself rather than anything else (Jameson, *Introduction* x). In addition, postmodernism is a narrative which marks the end of narratives, as it is no longer teleological (Jameson, *Introduction* xii). Postmodernist theory, is to Jameson, a desperate attempt "to take the temperature" (*Introduction* xi) of an age in which no coherent notion of Zeitgeist, age, or system exists (Jameson, *Introduction* xi).

Theories by Jean Baudrillard show some resemblance to Jameson's arguments. Baudrillard posits that life in the postmodern age has experienced a transformation from the physical to the virtual caused by the technological advancements of the digital age (Baudrillard 19). According to the controversial thinker, human beings can replicate themselves fully via modern technology because "all this digital, numerical, and electronic equipment is only the epiphenomenon of the virtualization of human beings in their core" (Baudrillard 20). Hence, digital reproduction enables the creation of virtual ready-made objects that either equate to existence or become more real than reality itself (Baudrillard 21). Baudrillard calls the latter state "hyperreality" (21). In his postmodern essays on the Gulf War, the philosopher even proclaims that the infamous American military intervention in middle east did not actually take place (Hammond 118-19). As a matter of fact, Baudrillard postulates that the said war was simply a collection of images (Hammond 119).

Slocombe puts forward that postmodern art is absurd (106). It represents the cultural and societal absurdities of the 20th century, such as mass genocides, the atomic bomb, and the rise of the computer age (Slocombe 106). In addition, the scientist posits that postmodernism adheres to no higher meaning; it is governed by chaos-systems (Slocombe 106). In literature various representations of Slocombe's theories can be found, as many postmodern texts are incoherent and seem to communicate little to nothing (Slocombe 107). Eventually, Slocombe concludes that the purpose of postmodern art "is to show that the "real" is absurd" (107).

According to Lyotard, postmodernism, that is to say, the postmodern condition, has transformed the rules of literature, arts, and even natural sciences (*Introduction xiii*). Artifacts or theories that arise from the aforesaid fields legitimize themselves via grand narratives, such as "the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth" (Lyotard, *Introduction* xxiii). Postmodernism has questioned the legitimacy of these grand narratives, narratives which themselves exhibit a legitimizing function (Lyotard 37). As Lyotard illustrates, "[t]he narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal" (*Introduction* xxiv). In postmodernism the legitimizing function of grand narratives is dissolved in a brush-stroke (Lyotard 37).

The abovementioned theories indicate that philosophies about postmodernism are vast and inherently different. However, McHale posits that all of the aforementioned scientists simply propose constructions of postmodernism which focus on different criteria (4-5). Consequently, McHale argues that postmodernism does *not* exist, just as much as realism or romanticism do not exist because they are fictions created by contemporary scientists (4). As a matter of fact, postmodernism is not a localizable concept or object in the world (McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* 1). Postmodernism essentially is a discourse; someone produces it and someone else uses it (McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* 1).

In conclusion, it can be argued that postmodernism is a highly controversial discourse (McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* 1) that summarizes and reflects the political, cultural, and societal absurdities of the 20th century (Slocombe 106). In addition, the postmodern period is the epitome of a cultural sphere that has lost touch with the substance of reality (Jameson, *Introduction* x) and its legitimizing function (Lyotard 37).

4.1.   Postmodernism in literature

Postmodernism is an epoch, namely *postmodernity* (Malpas 9). In literature, however, postmodernism is a style (Malpas 9). It is multi-faceted and difficult to define (Malpas 22). Nevertheless, one of the most salient features of postmodern literature is plurality (Malpas 24). Postmodern narratives are pluralistic and fragmented because narrators, voices, and styles are in constant conflict and contradict each other (Malpas 24). Moreover, postmodern authors tamper with linearity and ontology via narrative devices, such as impossible scenarios, fragmented discourse, metalepsis, or multiple endings (Slocombe 126).

With regard to the periodization and classification of postmodernism in literature, some theorists put forward that postmodernism is a literary movement subsequent to modernism, while others argue that postmodernism marks the beginning of a new historical cycle in Western culture (Hassan 85). Concerning the latter claim, it can be remarked that modernism and postmodernism cannot be strictly separated (Hassan 88). A writer may find it difficult to write a book that is solely modernist or postmodernist (Hassan 88). Such a book normally is modern *and* postmodern simultaneously (Hassan 88). Hence, the theoretical concept of postmodernism in literature

encompasses the continuity of modernism and the discontinuity of breaking with it (Hassan 88).

Postmodernism in literature is, nevertheless, described by literary critics, such as Hassan, as a "breakthrough" movement (Graff 31), since it broke with a particular traditional Western concept of literature as a "repository of moral and spiritual wisdom" (Graff 31). According to Hassan, postmodernism is a mode in literature that brought a salient artistic change (90). In contrast to modernism, it is "playful, paratactical, and deconstructionist" (Hassan 91). Hence, postmodernism in literature is a tendency to unmake, to disintegrate, to decompose, to decenter, to de-define, to discontinue, to delegitimize, and to rupture (Hassan 92). The works of postmodern authors are pluralistic, random, heterodox, deformed, and perverse (Hassan 92).

Graff, on the other hand, posits that postmodernism should *not* be classified as a "breakthrough" innovation, as such a claim would render postmodern writers completely independent from their predecessors (32). Furthermore, McHale argues that postmodernism does not break with grand narratives because it is in itself a metanarrative, namely that of change and innovation (McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* 22). Therefore, postmodernism cannot be a breakthrough movement (McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* 22).

Graff even claims that postmodernism is the result of a continuous development in literature which questions literature's antique and traditional role of providing knowledge and values about the world (32-3). This development has led to a loss of "value, pattern, and rationally intelligible meaning" (Graff 55) cutting literature's ties from all forms of reality (Graff 55). Hence, postmodernism represents the repressed sentiment in the Western cultural hemisphere that literature itself may mean little to nothing (Graff 32).

Slocombe puts forward that postmodernism in literature is a manifestation of nothingness which is caused by structural instability (106). Since the postmodern narrative is destabilized via narrative gaps, the reader is asked to question what he or she is reading and is asked to doubt the reading process itself (Slocombe 106). Like

Jameson, Slocombe alleges that postmodern art has no meaning, because it is based on events that are meaningless themselves (107).

Slocombe also shows that postmodern narratives tend to be irrational (109). The value of such irrational narratives lies in their effect onto the reader (Slocombe 109). These narratives create distance between the reader and the text which invites the former to pose questions about him or herself (Slocombe 109). Thereby, self-referentiality, a characteristic feature of postmodernism, is extended to domain of the reader. (Slocombe 109). Ultimately, postmodern literature attempts to place its readers "in a state of continual ontological uncertainty" (Malpas 25) via irrational narratives.

In postmodern literature traditional narrative structures are generally disregarded in exchange for new narratological innovations (Slocombe 117). Postmodern writers question reality itself and harbor suspicions against totalitarian views about ontology (Slocombe 117). For example, in postmodernism space is constructed on the basis of nothingness (Slocombe 123). That is to say, space that undermines the existence of literature itself is created because it is meaningless and unthinkable (Slocombe 123).

Another characteristic feature of postmodern narratives is self-erasure (McHale 101). This feature was neither invented by postmodernism, nor is it exclusively used in postmodernism (McHale 101). However, self-erasure is used to excess in postmodernism, since various literary works consist of narrative sequences that are constructed only to be deconstructed and negated abruptly (McHale 102). The effect on the reader is usually strongest if characters are erased because they are cognitive projections which enable reader engagement into a story world (McHale 103). In addition to characters, objects and places can be also be constructed and deconstructed, "can flicker in and out of existence" (McHale 106).

With regard to the book itself, postmodernism also introduced controversial ideas. A book is an object that provides permanent physical space for words (McHale 181). Words also exist outside of the book but their lifespan is inevitably shorter (McHale 181). In realist literature, which mimics the actual world, it is essential that the physical boundaries of the book, such as paper, spacing, front and back cover, do not interfere with the representation of reality (McHale 181). This would functionally intervene in

realistic representations (McHale 181). Consequently, the physical space of the book is functionally invisible in *pre*-postmodernism (McHale 181). In postmodernism, however, the excessive use of blank space foregrounds the material aspect of the book as a physical, space-providing entity and thereby disrupts the reality created in the book (McHale 181). Thereby, the fiction evoked by such books is deconstructed (McHale 181).

In conclusion, it can be summarized that some literary critics classify postmodernism as a breakthrough movement, while others propagate continuity in relation to other periods (Hassan 85). Eventually, it appears to be more plausible that postmodernism is the result of a continuous literary trend that questions traditional roles of literature (Graff 32-3). However, postmodernism deconstructs meaning and modes of representation to excess. Literary devices which are commonly used are narrative gaps, irrationality, self-reference, transformations of ontology, self-erasure, and the re-classification of the physical book itself.

4.2.   Postmodernism in children's picture books

Renown experts on postmodernism, such as Jameson, Slocombe, Lytoard, Baudrillard, Graff, Hassan, and McHale have not applied their theories to children's literature. Therefore, the present chapter will show that there is an extensive body of picture books that reflects the cultural and theoretical implications of postmodernism (Pantaleo and Sipe 1). In general terms, key features of postmodern picture books are irony, fragmentation, performance, participation, indeterminacy, hybridization and non-linearity (Pantaleo and Sipe 2).

Dresang argues that postmodern picture books contain literary manifestations of innovations of the digital age (41). Thus, postmodern children's literature may be as non-linear, user-controlled, and non-sequential, as modern technology (Dresang 41). In addition, postmodern literature exhibits connectivity, since new social worlds are created that enable association with entities outside the physical book itself (Dresang 41). Postmodern picture books are also highly accessible due to "breaking of long-standing information barriers" (Dresang 41) which provide entrance into formerly inaccessible literary spheres (Dresang 41).

Anstey further posits that postmodern children's literature is a manifestation of a new form of literacy because it asks its readers to engage in a narrative in innovative and unconventional ways (445-6). This new form of literacy reflects communicational changes introduced in the 21st century which are digital, fragmented and globalized (Anstey 446). An example of such digital communication and connectivity theories can be found in the wordless picture book *Flotsam* (2006). Processing this postmodern work of art, the reader is asked to produce his or her own story because there is no text (Dresang 49). Dresang claims that, thereby, the child reader can draw connections with other children, since the "potential for digital age connectivity outside the book is embedded in the story" (49). On the one hand, the picture book is fragmented, caused by a lack of text. On the other hand, *Flotsam* (2006) is globalized because it enables connectivity with entities outside of the physical book.

In *Flotsam* (2006) David Wiesner also seems to apply Baudrillard's theories about hyperreality. After finding a mystical Melville underwater camera the nameless protagonist of the story inspects a series of photos within photos via a lens (Wiesner, *Flotsam* double spreads 13-14). Then, the protagonist takes a photo of himself holding the multilevel photo series in his hands (Wiesner, *Flotsam* double spread 16). Thereby, he inscribes himself into a hyperreal reality of digital replications of different human beings (Baudrillard 20-1).

Jameson has argued that postmodern cultural artifacts do not represent an exterior referent but themselves (*Introduction* x). This postmodern theory is realized in children's literature via intertextuality. Intertextual narratives consist of "elements of another text (e.g. a book, film, movie, etc.) that incorporate references to or imitation of preexisting content in another context, often in subtle ways" (Dresang 42). An instance of reference from one cultural product to another is represented in Anthony Browne's *Little Beauty* (2008). When the gorilla watches the movie King Kong with his cat friend, it gets very angry about the negative portrayal of his species on TV (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spread 13). Hence, Browne makes a subtle intertextual reference to the commercial movie King Kong.

Beside the aforesaid features, postmodern picture books are typically unpredictable and reader expectations are continually shattered in these works (Goldstone and

Labbo 197). An illustration of this tendency can be found in the opening pages of David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001). There, an animal fable exhibits an unexpected turn, as one pig is blown out of the omnisciently narrated story world and transgresses onto another metalevel of the picture book (Wiesner double spread 3). This example shows postmodern literary techniques of de-centralization and rupture which have been proposed by Hassan (Hassan 92).

Goldstone and Labbo affirm that in postmodern picture books narrative sequences are continually disrupted (199). Thereby, narrative story worlds as a whole become increasingly fragmented (Goldstone and Labbo 199). In this context, the reader acts as a stabilizer of the narrative who has to make sense of an incomplete and incoherent story (Goldstone and Labbo 199). For example, in Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005) the story world is rendered unstable when an alternative ending is presented. This ending suggests that the rabbit was not eaten by the wolf (Hall 140). However, it is rather unconvincing because the collage of crumpled up paper implies that the rabbit died after all (Hall 140) (see fig.

Figure 7: Alternative ending (from: Wolves double spread 17)

7). Nevertheless, the viewer can decide to believe or not to believe this alternative ending and, thereby, stabilizes the story world. The fact that the reader has to support and co-author the narrative in postmodern picture books may prove the theories of Graff, who claims that that postmodern literature is meaningless (32), correct.

Postmodernism, in general, has revealed that human cognition is ironic and contradictory (Goldstone and Labbo 197). As a matter of fact, postmodern picture books are full of contradictory cognitive patterns (Goldstone and Labbo 197). It has already been outlined in section 2.2. that Meg McKinley's and Leila Rudge's *No Bears* (2013) is the epitome of contradiction. On the one hand, the book is based on a narrator who insists that there are no bears in the picture book (McKinlay and Rudge double spread 5). On the other hand, a bear continually engages in the book's story world (McKinlay and Rudge double spread 9). This might indicate that picture books are as irrational as other postmodern cultural artifacts (Slocombe 109).

Postmodern picture books experience further deconstruction, since the writing process is no longer sacrosanct in these works of art (Goldstone and Labbo 197). In postmodern picture books numerous cases can be identified where the material writing process shimmers through the fiction and becomes visible (Goldstone and Labbo 197). In *No Bears* (2013) the reader is reminded that the fiction is a highly artificial construct "because there are words everywhere. Words like once upon a time, and happily ever after, and the end" (McKinley and Rudge double spread 4). This indicates that writing lost its legitimizing function in the creation of fiction. Lyotard proposes similar ideas which are outlined in chapter 3. Furthermore, the aforementioned visibility of the writing process affirms McHale's theories about the deconstruction of the physical book (McHale 181).

Anstey shows that postmodern picture book authors apply further metafictive devices in order to change conventional ways of reading children's literature (447). One of these features is "perspective" where a story world may be narrated from a character's point of view (Anstey 447). For example, Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* (1998) narrates a walk in a park from four different perspectives.

Indeterminacy is a common characteristic of postmodern children's stories too (Anstey 477). These narratives ask the reader to extend the story world propagated in picture books (Anstey 447). Via indeterminacy, the pluralistic and fragmented nature of postmodern picture books provides multiple possible readings for a variety of audiences (Anstey 447). Such may be the case in Lynne Cherry's *The Armadillo from Amarillo* (1994) where the audience may either follow the storyline narrated by the protagonist Sasparillo in the form of postcards, or read the plot narrated by an omniscient, external voice.

The most characteristic feature of picture books, however, is their combination of text and illustration (Nikolajeva 56). This intermedial dimension is tampered with to the point of excess in postmodern picture books, as text and illustration may contradict each other (Nikolajeva 56). Thereby, new interpretative possibilities, which exceed written text, are produced (Nikolajeva 56). The reader may process discrepancies and establish a cognitive relation between contradiction among narrative and illustration (Anstey 450).

A representation of an antonymic relation between text and image can be found in David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001). Figure 8 shows that the text on the wolf's story level contradicts the illustration of the double spread (Wiesner double spread 3). Eventually, these manifestations of contradiction relate to Slocombe's assumptions about nothingness and structural instability (Slocombe 106). As a matter of fact, antonymic relations between

Figure 8: Contradiction image-text (from: The Three Pigs double spread 3)

image and text create narrative gaps and destabilize the story world (Slocombe 106). Consequently, the reader may start to doubt the narrative and consider it to be meaningless (Slocombe 106).
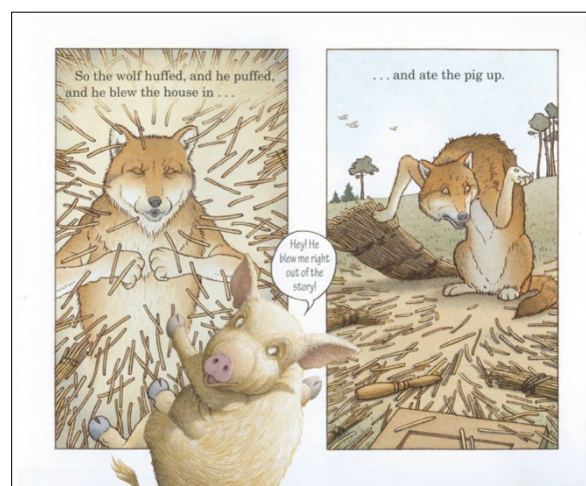
Illustrations and images have various effects in postmodern picture books and exhibit a more complex interplay with text than has been outlined so far. On the one hand, text is usually minimal in postmodern children's literature and, consequently, reading tempo is increased (Goldstone 123). On the other hand, the viewer needs more time to process the intricate illustrations in postmodern picture books (Goldstone 123). Thereby, the

Figure 9: Text-image relation (from: Little Beauty double spread 10)

reading process is slowed down and the tension between image and text is reduced (Goldstone 123-4). Moreover, the story world is rather shown than described (Goldstone 124). Anthony Browne's *Little Beauty* (2008) is a perfect example of this postmodern relation between text and image because many double spreads contain only *one* sentence but highly intricate illustrations (see fig. 9).
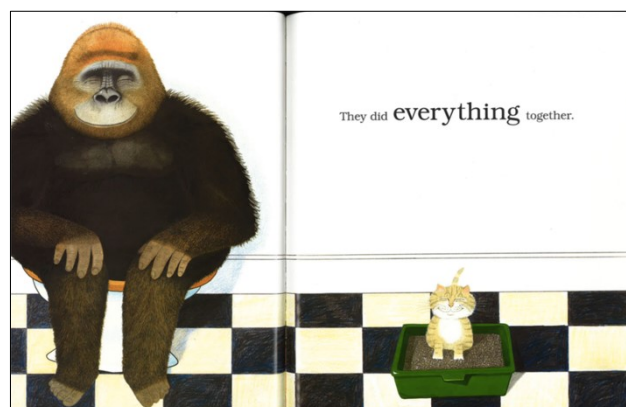
This reconfiguration of text also allows the characters to interact with text (Goldstone 123). Consequently, text loses its narrative purpose (Goldstone 123). In David

Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001) the pigs reorder letters in order to create an alternative ending of the primary narrative (Wiesner double spread 19). This form of tampering with text highlights the artificiality and non-linearity of the picture book (Goldstone 123).

With regard to plurality, postmodern picture books may contain parallel narratives which can comment on the primary, action-driven plot (Nikolajeva 67). Nevertheless, these side stories may also be completely independent from the primary narrative (Nikolajeva 67). Examples can be found in the picture book sample of this thesis. While the protagonists in *The Three Pigs* (2001) become completely independent from their original narrative, the bear in *No Bears* (2013) continuously interferes in the primary story level.

Concerning physical attributes, postmodern picture books are quite large for numerous reasons (Nikolajeva 59). On the one hand, double spread layout, cover, or endpaper may contain various illustrations or narrative details that can contribute to the primary narrative which demand more space (Nikolajeva 58-59). On the other hand, postmodern children's literature often consists of central images surrounded by substantial amounts of white space (Nikolajeva 59). Anstey argues that such an unconventional double spread layout challenges traditional reading strategies and prompts the viewer to consider alternative ways to process the narrative (449).

Aside from the abovementioned characteristics, the most innovative and striking feature of postmodern picture books is their reconfiguration of space. Conventional picture books consist of three spatial dimensions, namely fore, mid, and background, where characters are carefully placed (Goldstone 118). The action of the narrative mainly takes place on the mid-ground, while text is restricted to the bottom of the page (Goldstone 118). As a result of this division, the storyline narrated via text is not part of the image (Goldstone 118).

In contrast to conventional narrative approaches to picture books, postmodern children's literature manipulates space and creates five distinct spatial dimensions (Goldstone 118). The fourth dimension encompasses shared space between the reader and the physical book itself where characters can transgress into the space of

the audience (Goldstone 118). In this alternative spatial layer, the characters have the ability to interact with the audience (Goldstone 119). This reader-character communication in the fourth dimension can also extend into physical domains, as human hands can interact with the picture book (Goldstone 119-20). Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005) actually contains various elements that can be touched and taken out of the book (see fig. 10).

Figure 10: Fourth dimension (from: Wolves double spread 5)

The fifth dimension is the spatial layer which can be found underneath the pages of the postmodern picture book (Goldstone 118). In this spatial sphere, characters can explore an expanded universe which can appear in different forms (Goldstone 120). In David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001), as an illustration, this expanded universe is constructed out of blank space. This dimension is explored by the characters themselves (Wiesner double spread 6). Consequently, the fifth dimension enables the construction of new story worlds by the characters.

These postmodern notions of space have turned the surface of the picture book into a highly dynamic unit (Goldstone 118-9). Characters are no longer restricted to the physical space of the book itself because they can move back and forth between audience-space and book-space (Goldstone 118). In Richard Byrne's *This Book Just Ate My Dog* (2014) the characters transgress into audience-space when they ask the reader to shake the book in order to free them from the hungry center of the picture book (Byrne double spread 13). Such a dynamic surface is a narrative machinery which produces numerous alternative realities (Goldstone 118-9).

The innovative spatial arrangements that postmodernism introduced to picture books also affects the placement of text (Goldstone 119). Text is no longer restricted to the bottom of the page in postmodern children's literature (Goldstone 119). To give an example, in *No Bears* (2013) text is placed literally anywhere in

Figure 11: Text placement (from: No Bears double spread 12)

the illustrated story world (see fig. 11). As a matter of fact, text is synchronized with illustrated action. Text, thereby, becomes an integrated whole of the double-spread (Goldstone 119).

Ultimately, postmodern picture books consist of manifestations of connectivity and communication theories of the digital age (Dresang 41). Furthermore, these children's books may be hyperreal and tend to contain intertextual references (Dresang 42). In general, postmodern children's literature is unpredictable, fragmented, contradictory and metafictive. Postmodern children's books authors have also introduced highly complex illustration-text relations into their works (Nikolajeva 56). In addition, postmodern picture books extend space into a 4th and 5th spatial dimension where reader and book space seem to merge (Goldstone 118).

5. Rethinking postmodernism in picture books

It has been shown in chapter 4 that postmodernism in literature fragments the story world, disrupts the reading process, and highlights the artificiality of the writing process. In addition, postmodern writing employs various metafictional devices and is highly self-reflexive. Alber, however, proposes a different literary classification model of postmodernism. According to the unnatural narratologist, the representation of impossibility is postmodernism's most central feature (Alber 7). Postmodernism deconstructs real-world parameters governed by the laws of logic and physics in its cultural artifacts (Alber 8). Consequently, many postmodern works can be categorized as unnatural literature.

The deconstruction of physical and logical parameters, such as time, space, and narration is not a postmodern invention per se (Alber 5-6). Violations of real-world frames are a pervasive feature in various literary periods, as "speaking animals, animated corpses, coexisting time flows, and flying islands were as impossible in the past as they are today" (Alber 6). Furthermore, postmodern narratives employ features from historical genres, including heroic epics, beast fables, romance, realist texts, gothic novels, stream-of-consciousness novels, ghost plays, fantasy, children's stories, and science fiction (Alber 10).

As a result, postmodernism can be related to the history of unnatural literature via a continuum of manifestations of the unnatural over various literary periods and styles (Alber 13). This classification model defines postmodernism as "just one specific manifestation of the unnatural; it is a style or type of writing that correlates with a high degree of unnaturalness and, in addition, relates back to already conventionalized impossibilities in established genres" (Alber 13).

A re-classification of postmodernism can also be conducted with regard to the purpose of postmodern children's literature. Anstey claims that fragmentation and plurality in postmodern children's picture books "challenge the traditional audience of picture books" (447). Goldstone and Labbo posit that the highlighted artificiality of the picture book causes the reader to doubt the degree of reality that fiction evokes (201). The children's literature experts elaborate on their theory in the following manner:

> In traditional picture books, the story invites the reader into its newly created world of words and images. The reader gives up the "here-and-now" and is swept away by the story's unfolding plot. […] Postmodern picture books keep the reader aware of the surrounding physical world. True, these books invite the reader into the story, but they provide reminders to keep one foot in reality. (Goldstone and Labbo 201)

Hence, according to Goldstone and Labbo, postmodern devices in children's picture books render full immersion into constructed story worlds difficult (201). However, strategies how the audience may overcome the estranging effect of these devices are not suggested by the scholars. As a matter of fact, none of the literary scientists listed in chapter 4 provide such sense-making models in relation to the intended audience of postmodern picture books.

Another controversial argument that Goldstone and Labbo put forward is that the linguistic codes which are inherent to postmodern picture books are too complex to be decoded by children (203). Child readers, therefore, must be taught how to read postmodern literature (Goldstone and Labbo 203). Consequently, Goldstone and Labbo have conservative doubts whether postmodern children's literature is suitable for children due to its complexity (198). However, in a different paper Goldstone proposes that young readers actually may be *more* open towards postmodern narratives, since they do not possess a firm understanding of linearity, impossibility, and fragmentation (Goldstone, *Whaz Up with our Books?* 368). In contrast to child readers, adults tend to harbor severe reservations about unconventional forms of

literature (Goldstone, *Whaz Up with our Books?* 368). Therefore, children are a highly suitable audience for postmodern picture books.

Ultimately, it can be concluded that unnatural narratology may serve as a narratological framework for the analysis of postmodern picture books, if challenging its audience via literary complexity is the intended purpose of postmodern children's literature or postmodernism in general. While postmodernism seems to be preoccupied with the fragmentation and deconstruction of the real world in literature, unnatural narratology provides answers to the question about how readers can cope with such fragmented story worlds and what these narratives reveal about human cognition (Alber et. al. 375). Furthermore, postmodernism is one genre among others which represents different manifestations of the unnatural (Alber 13). The following chapters will, therefore, re-evaluate various postmodern literary devices of fragmentation, plurality, self-reference, and deconstruction.

5.1. Metafiction

Metafiction is a type of fictional writing which is highly self-conscious, playful, naïve, and it creates an unstable relation to reality (Waugh 2). Furthermore, metafictional writing draws the reader's attention to the materiality of the writing process and reveals a book's ontological nature as an artistic artefact (Waugh 2). When writers apply metafiction in their works, they examine the foundations of narrative structure and they "explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (Waugh 2).

Scholes defines metafiction in a more radical manner. The scholar posits that metafictional writing "attempts, among other things, to assault or transcend the laws of fiction" (Scholes 114). According to Scholes, writers, such as Coover or Gass, who use different metafictional devices in their works, strive to find ultimate truths that are hidden behind the formal aspects of writing (123). However, Scholes alleges that these elemental truths cannot be found (123).

The controversial thinker further claims that metafictional writing threatens the nature of imagination in writing (Scholes 218). He insists that "[r]eaders need imaginative help from writers" (Scholes 218) and calls the act of metafictional writing "masturbatory"

(Scholes 218). Scholes believes that it is only a resurrection of fabulation which may challenge this inevitable loss of imagination (218). Hence, Scholes has a very pessimistic opinion about metafiction.

Waugh attributes numerous purposes to metafiction. She shows that metafiction is employed to investigate the arbitrariness of the linguistic system (Waugh 3). As a matter of fact, the idea that language is a mediating agent between the real world and the human self, which objectively and passively reports on our surroundings, is imprecise (Waugh 3). Language is de facto "an independent, self-contained system which generates its own 'meanings'. Its relationship to the phenomenal world is highly complex, problematic and regulated by convention" (Waugh 3). Thus, another aim of metafictional writing is to explore how human beings conceptualize reality via language.

The theory of metafiction is, therefore, based on the scientific view that individuals perceive the world in different ways and even change what they observe on a perceptive level of cognition (Waugh 3). Hence, exploring the way how human beings mediate the world, for example in literature, is a fundamental dilemma, as nothing can be objectively described because there is no normative way of description (Waugh 3-4). Metafiction cannot overcome this linguistic "'prisonhouse' from which the possibility of escape is remote" (Waugh 4). Nevertheless, it can investigate and explore the artistic construction of different modes of description and observation in literature (Waugh 4).

Waugh's theories about metafictional writing and the linguistic system (3-4) are affirmed by Zimmermann's analysis of Canadian literature (272). Zimmermann's studies illustrate that the works of Gunnar, Atwood, Lawrence, Ondaatje, and Kroetsch parody literary tradition and convention via metafiction (272). Concerning to the role of language in these texts, Zimmermann elaborates: "Die überkommene Ansicht, Sprache bildet die Wirklichkeit ab, wird thematisiert, problematisiert und in Frage gestellt" (272).

With regard to the literary style of postmodernism, a causal relationship between postmodernism and metafiction cannot be established because other literary

movements make use of metafictional devices as well (Ommundsen 14). In essence, metafictional writing employs strategies that prompt the reader to think about various narrative levels that have different meanings (Ommundsen 4-5). In addition, metafictional literature frequently reminds the reader about the function of the narrative and the role of the audience (Ommundsen 6). In many cases, the reader is directly addressed to in order to create a self-reflexive narrative (Ommundsen 7). Further characteristic metafictional devices in literature are the representation of stories within stories, contradictory situations in a story world, or characters who read or narrate "their own fictional lives" (Waugh 30). Structural incoherence is also a typical feature of metafictional writing (Ommundsen 9). Shattering reader expectations via multiple or open endings is a common way of achieving such structural incoherence (Ommundsen 9). Eventually, the analysis conducted in this chapter will show that numerous manifestations of metafiction can be found in postmodern children's picture books.

In order to establish further ties between metafiction and postmodernism, it is essential to outline fundamental philosophical implications of postmodernism. Postmodernist literature is based on the view that books that predate the modern period are organized and structured via frames (Waugh 28). These frames are established systems, support, and substructures which govern all manifestations of life and life itself (Waugh 28). Postmodern writers are especially interested to find out which of these frames separate fiction from the real world (Waugh 28). To postmodern authors, the physical shape of the book and its front and back cover are an unsatisfying answer to the question about how books draw a sharp line between reality and the literary story worlds they create (Waugh 28). In many cases, postmodern literature explores this notion of separating frames in a playful manner, as narratives are constructed which are endless loops, or the action of a story starts *medias in res* to indicate the absence of a clear beginning (Waugh 29). Eventually, the application of metafictional devices shows "that life, as well as novels, is constructed through frames, and that it is finally impossible to know where one frame ends and another begins" (Waugh 29).

In general terms, it can be summarized that metafiction is a theory about how human beings mediate and reflect the real world in literature (Waugh 2). For example, the construction of characters in literature via the medium of language may reveal vital information about how subjectivity is created in the real world (Waugh 3).

Consequently, metafictional writing, even though it describes the writing process in itself, is somehow related to the world outside of a book.

Ommundsen even posits that there is concrete interaction and involvement between metafictional writings and the "real world" (4). Many metafictional works actually provoked quite real reactions, such as the highly controversial works of Salman Rushdie (Ommundsen 3). Therefore, it can be argued that literature that describes itself still exhibits a certain tie to reality.

Ultimately, metafiction in writing reveals the materiality of the book as an artifact of artistic construction (Waugh 2). Furthermore, metafictional devices explore the arbitrariness of language as a mode of description and observation in literature (Waugh 3-4). In addition, many postmodern authors attempt to investigate which frames separate fiction from reality (Waugh 28-9). While metafictional writing essentially describes itself, these metafictional books still exhibit some form of interaction with the real world (Ommundsen 4). In the following it will be argued that various metafictional features of postmodern children's literature not only provoke reaction from the real world but are alternative states of affairs, that is to say, possible worlds which are placed either within the narrative itself or in the actual world where the reader is physically located. In addition, the research will show that metafiction actually triggers reader imagination.

5.1.1. Unnatural metalepsis

Narratives can contain multiple story worlds (Thoss 192). In many cases such a multilayered narrative universe is constructed by placing worlds within worlds (Thoss 192). Hence, within one story world other story worlds may exist (Thoss 192). Movement among these literary worlds is enabled via metalepsis (Thoss 192).

Metalepsis is a writing technique which includes shifts between diegetic, intradiegetic, metadiegetic, and extradiegetic levels of a narrative (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 383). It can also be classified "as the move of existants or actants from any hierarchically ordered level into one above or below" (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 383). Consequently, entities can transition upwards and downwards between different narration-levels within a story world.

With regard to effects, metalepsis can also cause a scene shift which "is a move from one setting and set of characters to a different setting and set of characters" (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 389). These scene shifts typically affect the narrative on a macro level (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 389). Metaleptic scene shifts have a highly metafictional effect (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 390). They allow the reader to catch "a brief glimpse into the machinery producing the story through the technology of narration" (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 392). Therefore, metalepsis is a characteristic feature of postmodern, metafictional writing (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 392). Nevertheless, the appliance of metalepsis in writing reaches back to Renaissance and antiquity (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 392). Like many other literary features metalepsis is used excessively in postmodern children's literature.

According to traditional classification models, there are four types of metalepsis: authorial, narratorial, lectorial, and rethorical or discourse metalepsis (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 389). These types of metalepsis can have different effects onto the narrative. For example, narrators and characters may be moved to lower narrative levels within a story world (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 384). Such narratological transformations can render narrators into characters and characters into narrators (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 385). Thereby, metalepsis may undermine the realistic illusion of a text, as narrative levels are transgressed (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 384).

Bell and Alber, two unnatural narratologists, have recently extended the classification of metalepsis by three new types: ascending, descending, and horizontal metalepsis (167). In the case of ascending metalepsis, a narrator or character moves from an embedded story world to another story world which is located on a hierarchically higher level (Bell and Alber 168). In descending metalepsis, a narrator or character transgresses into an embedded story world or an author moves from the actual world into the fictional story world itself (Bell and Alber 168). These two forms of metalepsis are additionally classified as "vertical metalepsis" (Bell and Alber 168). In horizontal metalepsis, "transmigration of a character or narrator into a different fictional text" occurs (Bell and Alber 168). This form of story world crossing involves the violation of narrative boundaries, as metaleptic jumps between spheres are made that are ontologically distinct (Bell and Alber 168).

Bell's and Alber's approach to metalepsis is particularly innovative because it disregards textual structures in metaleptic shifts. According to Bell and Alber, metalepsis rather occurs on an ontological than on a narrative level (169). When a character jumps from one story world into another one, then this transition is not conducted between different narration levels of a narrative but conducted between two inherently different literary worlds (Bell and Alber 169-70). Bell and Alber additionally propose that this form of metalepsis may enforce an illusion in which characters inhibit audience space, since it asks the reader to imagine an alternative state of affairs where transition into distinct ontological domains is possible (169).

Thoss specifies metalepsis even further according to three different types: "transgression between a story world and another (imaginary) world; feigned transgressions between a story world and reality; and transgressions between story and discourse" (Thoss 190). Type 1 of Thoss' metalepsis involves jumps between ontologically distinct story worlds that are placed in the same narrative (Thoss 192). Type 2 refers to "paradoxical continuity between a story world and the real world of its recipients" (Thoss 198). The aim of the latter form of metalepsis is to blur the line between reality and fiction in an unexpected twist (Thoss 198-200). Type 3 metalepsis, as defined by Thoss, affects the spheres of discourse and story, as textual processing is rendered more difficult (202). To illustrate Toss' claim, in a comic book, illustration, panels and text make it easy for the reader to distinguish between how the narrative is conveyed and what is conveyed (Thoss 202). Type 3 metalepsis tampers with these parameters of a narrative because the distinction between "the telling and the told" (Thoss 202) is intermingled and re-constructed in illicit ways (Thoss 202).

Concerning ontological metalepsis, all instances of ontological transgressions between narrative levels are physically and logically impossible because entities which are located in different ontological states cannot interact with one another (Bell and Alber 167). Numerous manifestations of impossible ontological metalepsis can be found in postmodern children's picture books. Consequently, a re-classification of narratives that contain metalepsis will be conducted on the basis of Bell's and Alber's, and Thoss' innovative categorization schemata.

In David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001) the characters ascend to a hierarchically higher, ontologically different story world (Bell and Alber 168), namely the white space underneath the fiction itself (see fig. 12). Figure 12 additionally shows an instance of Thoss' Type 2 metalepsis when one of the pig protagonists realizes that a viewer is watching the action (Wiesner double spread 12). In the scene, the concrete boundaries between reality and fiction are deconstructed in a twist (Thoss 198-200). Thereby, the
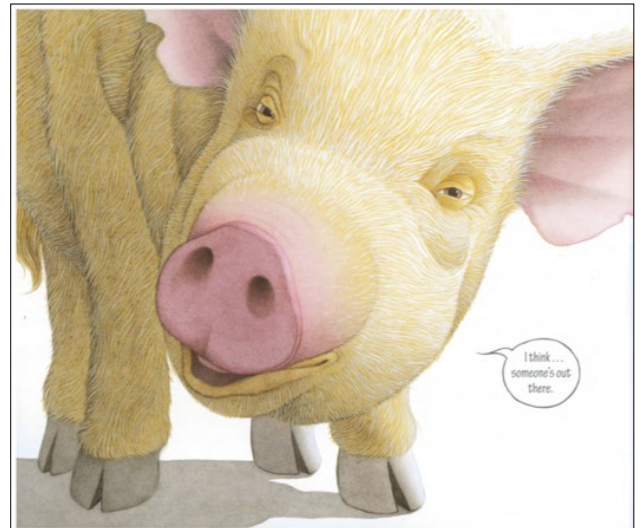

Figure 12: Ascending, Type 2 metalepsis (from: The Three Pigs double spread 12)

picture book stimulates the reader to imagine that movement between two ontologically distinct worlds *is* possible and that fictional characters are somehow connected to audience space (Bell and Alber 169). Thoss further affirms that such a form of metalepsis breaks the fourth wall and dissolves the ontological line that separates the world of the characters from the world of the audience (201). It can therefore be argued, that the pigs have conducted a metaleptic jump into a possible world where interaction between fictional and actual entities is enabled, where the reader may enter the story world (Palmer 33-4). Moreover, this possible world differs from the textual actual world with regard to inventory (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 33) because it is entirely constructed out of white space.

The Three Pigs (2001) also consists of an instance of horizontal metalepsis. Figure 13 depicts a scene from the picture book's plot where the pigs rescue a dragon from a king who wants to rob the dragon's treasure (Wiesner double spread 15). The sequence seems to be a scene from an entirely different narrative. Consequently, the pigs and the dragon conduct a metalpetic jump between two different fictions on a horizontal axis (Bell and

Figure 13: Horizontal metalepsis (from: The Three Pigs double spread 15)

Alber 168), as the dragon is moved from one independent narrative to another.

The aforesaid metaleptic movement among different story worlds can also be interpreted as a form of travel between possible worlds within a pluralistic narrative universe that contains ontologically distinct literary worlds (Ryan 656). The protagonists in *The Three Pigs* (2001) seem to jump from branch to branch in a highly complex multiverse of seemingly endless possibilities and these transitions affect their narrative universe as a whole (Ryan 656). Via these metaleptic jumps the pigs also shape their own narratives and assert legitimacy to the possible worlds they transition into (Lewis 85-6), while liberating themselves from their author. Thoss supports the latter claim, as he argues "that the conflict between creator and creation is actually one of the contexts metalepsis is most often found in" (198). That is to say, metalepsis occurs in contexts where characters become independent from their authors.

The book eating boy Henry in Oliver Jeffer's picture book *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006) also conducts an impossible metaleptic jump. The last two double spreads of the picture book contain an actual bite mark which suggests that Henry, who is notoriously known for eating any book he can get his hands on, has ascended to a higher level of narration and took a bite of the picture book that the viewer is currently reading (Bell and Alber 168). Henry made a "feigned transgression" between a fictional story world and reality (Thoss 190). Hence, the reader is asked to imagine that a fictional character can exist outside of a book in the realm of the actual world.

Arizpe et. al., who conducted a wide age-group study on children's reactions to metafictional postmodern picture books, show that such feigned transgression may be perceived as actual events (207). Their study includes Oliver Jeffers *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006) (Arizpe et. al. 218). Among the study participants the bite mark in Oliver Jeffer's picture book was cause of speculation that Henry really took a bite of the picture book that the readers were holding in their hands (Arizpe et. al. 219). These study results show that viewers reconstructed a narrative story world with the material at hand (Alber 53), that is to say, the viewers applied Alber's "Do-it-yourself" approach. Moreover, the readers considered the possibility that Henry actually escaped the picture book which indicates that there is accessibility between the possible world of the narrative and the actual world of the viewer (Ryan 645).

In Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* (1998) the reader can detect more instances of metaleptic movements. Figure 14 shows a frightened monkey protagonist who is crying out for her son Charles (Browne ch. 1). While doing so her hat ascends into the white space that the story world is embedded into (Browne ch. 1). Furthermore, her yell is so strong that it bends trees and blows their crowns and leaves into an alternative story world as well (Browne ch. 1). These unnatural movements are a manifestation of Thoss' Type 3 metalepsis. The structures which govern the narrative, in this case the edges of the illustration, are rendered into a state

You get some frightful types in the park these days! I called his name for what seemed like ages.

Figure 14: Ascending metalepsis (from: Voices in the Park ch. 1)

of dysfunction, as the containment strategies of the narrative are dissolved (Thoss 206). Thereby, space which had been originally occupied for narration or for limiting narration is transformed into narrated space (Thoss 206).
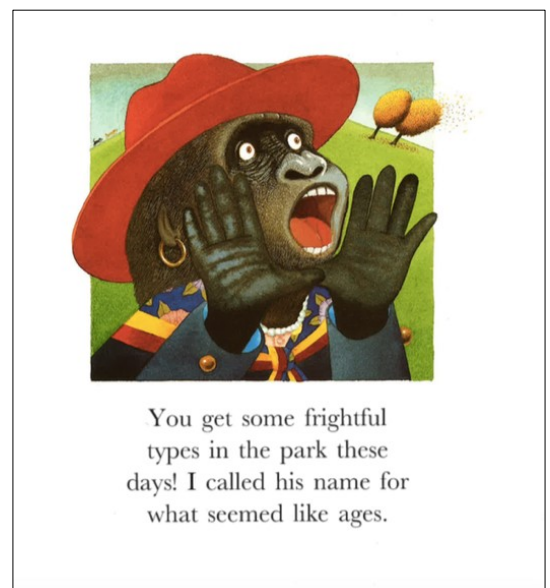
It can also be argued that the narrative story world to which the protagonist's hat and the leaves of the trees ascend to is a possible world of a textual actual world. In this possible world entities exist as counterparts in various domains simultaneously (Bell and Alber 171). Consequently, the frightened monkey mother and all her surroundings exist as copies in a possible world (Ryan 639) which differs in location from the textual actual world (Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds 2-3*). When the monkey protagonist cries out Charles' name, these elements are simply partially transitioned into this possible world where movement and action is synchronized with the textual actual world of the picture book.

Concerning descending ontological movements, various manifestations of such metaleptic jumps are depicted in Richard Byrne's *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* (2014). In the picture book, the characters transition into the center of the double spread which interrupts linear movement from recto to verso (Byrne double spreads 1-11). Hence, the characters transcend into a story world that is embedded within another story world (Bell and Alber 168). Even though such movements, jumps, and transgressions implied

by vertical metalepsis are de facto impossible, these literary phenomena prompt the reader to imagine that the said movements *do* take place (Bell and Alber 169). Hence, the impossible book center space may simply be a possible world of the textual actual universe of *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* (2014). This possible world can be accessed from the textual actual world of the picture book (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 31).

Ultimately, the analysis conducted indicates that metalepsis is not only a metafictional device which allows readers to catch a glimpse of the act of literary creation (Fludernik, *Scene Shift* 392). Metalepsis enables characters to ascend and descend in between vertically and horizontally aligned story worlds of different ontology (Bell and Alber 167-68). Furthermore, readers may use PWT sense-making to explain these ontological movements. As has been illustrated in this chapter, characters may travel from textual actual to possible worlds within complex narrative multiverses. All of these metaleptic movements are impossible which renders metalepsis into a manifestation of the unnatural.

5.1.2. The unnatural *mise en abyme*

When humans position themselves between two mirrors which are organized in a parallel arrangement then they can look in either of the two mirrors and they will be able to see an infinite number of copies of themselves. This effect is called *mise en abyme*, a term coined by André Gide in 1893 (White 33). In literature, *the mise en abyme* attempts to evoke a similar effect. It refers to either a miniature version of the story world within the story world or to an image of the story world which reflects the story world as a whole (White 33).

The *mise en abyme* can serve multiple purposes. It can represent the relationship between the micro and the macro level of a literary world, create a satirical effect via duplication, or serve didactic functions (White 34). Most importantly, however, the *mise en abyme* is an exclusive form of literary reflexivity (White 34). The *mise en abyme* is, thus, a common feature of metafictional, postmodern writing because it highlights the artificiality of text via mirroring it in multiple ways (Ommundsen 10).

Zimmermann affirms the latter claim, as she argues that the *mise en abyme* is used to show how writing is conducted and which problems may occur during this process (53).

In a postmodern context, intricate and complex *mise en abyme* patterns are additionally applied to illustrate that there is no normative and set notion of reality (Zimmermann 56). It could even be argued that the *mise en abyme* intermingles frames in a manner which makes it impossible to distinguish between the boundaries of fiction and reality (Waugh 29).

Kurtz also classifies the *mise en abyme* as a miniaturized repetition of a whole narrative within the same narrative (24). Furthermore, Kurtz illustrates that the *mise en abyme* is thoroughly encoded into the act of narration (26). It exists on the meta-level of a narrative, while affecting the story world of the characters (Kurtz 26). Due to these features, the *mise en abyme* is often not explicitly recognized as a means of self-reflection by the reader (Kurtz 26). Kurtz, therefore, describes the *mise en abyme* as the most literary form of self-reference (26).

With regard to spatial terms, it is important to note that the *en abyme* level of the *mise en abyme* refers to positioning rather than content (White 34). *En abyme* means that an entity contains a miniature replica of itself in its center (White 34). In addition, the *mise en abyme* is "an instance of total iconic isomorphism in all respects except size and context" (White 34). This complex patterns can be illustratively imagined as a shield within a shield within a shield et cetera (White 34). In this example, the *embedded* entity resembles the *embedding* entity precisely, while the embedded entity is miniaturized on a spatial level (White 34).

The *mise en abyme* is also often referred to as a metaphor of abyss because it creates an endless loop of entities (White 36). "Strictly speaking, a shield within a shield implies a shield within a shield within a shield within … and so on *ad infinitum*" (White 36). Primarily though, the *mise en abyme* has a self-duplicating function (White 37). It represents a work fiction within the main work of fiction itself (White 37).

(Self-)Duplication occurs when a smaller story world is embedded in a larger story world *en miniature* (Goebel 86). Infinite duplication or infinite regress occurs when the aforesaid pattern of embedding is repeated *ad infinitum* and the replicas are stretched further and further into one another until the human eye cannot identify these replicas anymore (Goebel 86).

With regard to infinite regress, duplication or triplication of a story world within a story world is sufficient to create such an endless illusion (White 38). The function of duplication or triplication is often metaphorical (White 38-9). These metaphors exhibit a reciprocal relation, as one element of the narrative is constructed out of the other and vice versa (White 39).

Due to its complexity, the *mise en abyme* demands substantial creativity and imagination from its readers (White 50). In many cases, the purpose of the *mise en abyme* is to prompt the reader to imagine further duplicate or triplicate patterns of representation (White 40). On a highly complex level, the *mise en abyme* reveals that a sign does not refer to one specific object, but that a sign can have another sign as its referent (White 42).

Duplication in literature may also be paradox (Goebel 87). In this case of the *mise en abyme*, the replica, or the mirror image so to say, reacts to the viewer in an unexpected way (Goebel 87). When we look in the mirror and our mirror image puts its tongue out, then paradoxical duplication takes place (Goebel 87). In literature, this means that a seemingly subordinate narrative is rendered into a superior narrative on a hierarchical level (Goebel 87).

In order to relate the *mise en abyme* to unnatural narratology, it can be stated that a world within a world within a world *ad infinitum* is a physical and logical impossibility according to Alber's classification scheme (25). Hence, the *mise en abyme* is unnatural. Furthermore, the *mise en abyme* exceeds the scope of its postmodern metafictional purpose in children's picture books because it can be decoded according to the parameters of PWT.

Realizations of the *mise en abyme* can be found in Meg McKinlay's and Leila Rudge's *No Bears* (2011). Most double spreads of the picture book contain *mise en abyme* patterns. As a matter of fact, the story narrated by Ruby is duplicated on the double spreads *en miniature* (Goebel 86). While the mode of narration of the two replicas differs – one is a visual, the other textual – their content is essentially the same. Additionally, the two story worlds exhibit a reciprocal relation, since both textual and

illustrated narratives seem to co-construct one another (White 39). This *mise en abyme* pattern is shown in figure 15.

Fig. 15: *mise en abyme (*from: *No Bears* double spread 6)

The *mise en abyme* in *No Bears* (2011) may be made sense of by the viewer without reflecting upon the material writing process of the picture book, in other words, without reflecting about metafiction. To the reader the visual story world, which is embedded within the narrative *en miniature*, may be a possible world attached to the textual actual world of the narrative. Both story worlds differ only minimally in structure (Doležel 19), as one is represented in text and the other via illustration. It could even be argued that the embedded story world does not even differ from the embedding story world with regard to the manner of their existence (Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* 2-3). The two narrative worlds only differ in location (Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* 2-3), since the story world narrated by Ruby is located at the top of the double spread and its replica is located at the center of the double spread.

Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005) also consists of a *mise en abyme* pattern. In Gravett's picture book, story worlds are embedded *ad infinitum*, as suggested by Goebel (86). An example is displayed in figure 16**.** In the scene the narrative is located in the embedding frame of the physical picture book itself (Gravett double spread 14). Within that frame another book seems to be embedded because the layout of the running text indicates that there is another red linen book within the book that the reader is physically holding in his or her hands (Gravett double spread 14). In the book within

the book, the story world of the rabbit is embedded (Gravett double spread 14). This story world is then embedded again in the picture book that the rabbit holds in its hand (Gravett double spread 14). Consequently, this manifestation of *mise en abyme* creates the illusion of infinite regress (White 38), since the book that the rabbit holds in its hands must contain further replicas of the story world as a whole.

Figure 16: mise en abyme (from: Wolves double spread 14)

The complex *mise en abyme* scheme in Gravett's *Wolves* (2005) does not necessarily prompt the reader to think about the materiality of the writing process in a metafictional manner. As a matter of fact, the reader may not consciously reflect upon this complex pattern (Kurtz 26). If the reader decides that replicas of a world can exist within other replicas, then the reader may perceive an embedded story world as a possible world of a textual actual world. As a matter of fact, if the reader accepts that contradiction is possible in the textual actual world, in this case the embedding story world, then contradiction is also possible in all possible replicas of that world (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 33). As a result, the reader may not categorize the *mise en abyme* as a metafictional writing device which draws attention to the materiality of the picture book but simply regard the *mise en abyme* as a possible world within the narrative.

Another highly complex manifestation of the *mise en abyme* can be found in Oliver Jeffer's *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006). Figure 17 shows Henry reading a book with a bite mark (Jeffers double spread 15). Considering that the actual physical book that the viewer is reading also contains a bite mark on the last three pages, it can be concluded that the illustration depicted in figure 17 is an image that reflects the whole story world of *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006) (White 33). It could also be speculated that the physical picture book is placed in the narrative universe of *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006) *en miniature* (Goebel 86) because both books contain bite marks, the fictional and the actual one. The reader may, again, identify

Figure 17: mise en abyme (from: The Incredible Book Eating Boy double spread 15)

this intricate *mise en abyme* as a possible world of a textual actual world or even as a possible world of the actual world itself. In the latter case *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006) would be an alternative state of affairs to reality where young boys can eat books and get smarter by doing so.
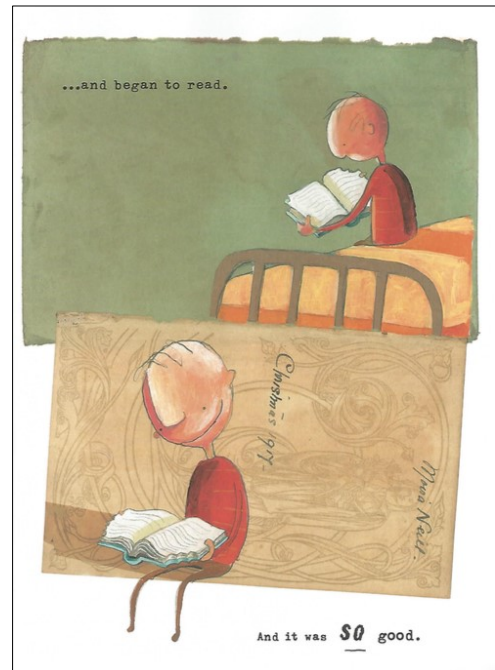
Anthony Browne's *Little Beauty* (2008) also consists of intricate *mise en abyme* patterns. Figures 18 and 19 show a white and a pink flower, respectively. Both images are located on the first two double spreads of the picture book (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spreads 1-2). Close inspection of the illustrations reveals that beauty's face is represented at the center of the white flower and that gorilla's face is represented at the center of the pink flower (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spreads 1-2). These flower symbols are shown again on the last double spread of *Little Beauty* (2008) (see fig. 20). The action of the picture book, eventually, culminates in never ending friendship symbolized by the beauty of the two flowers (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spread 17).

In technical literary terms the aforesaid pattern can be classified as a *mise en abyme* because an image is used to represent the narrative as a whole (White 33). The two flowers embody the theme of friendship which is the superior motif of *Little Beauty* (2008). The reader may, however, disregard the pattern of representing a whole

narrative in a miniature symbol. If a child reader closely inspects the said flower images and recognizes beauty's and gorilla's faces, the viewer may simply conclude that in a possible world of the narrative monkeys and cats can be flowers. This possible world would differ from the textual actual world of *Little Beauty* (2008) only in taxonomic compatibility (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 33).
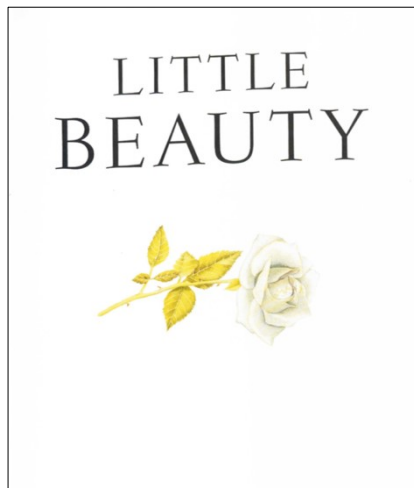

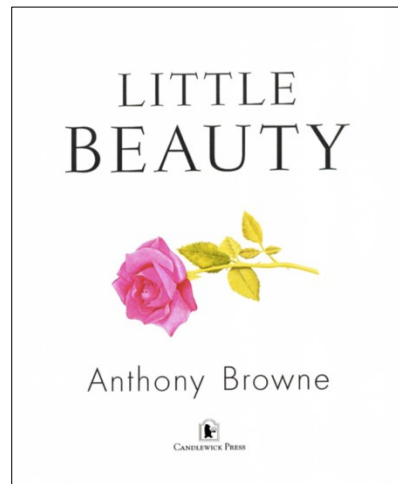Figure 18: mise en abyme (from: Little Beauty double spread 1)

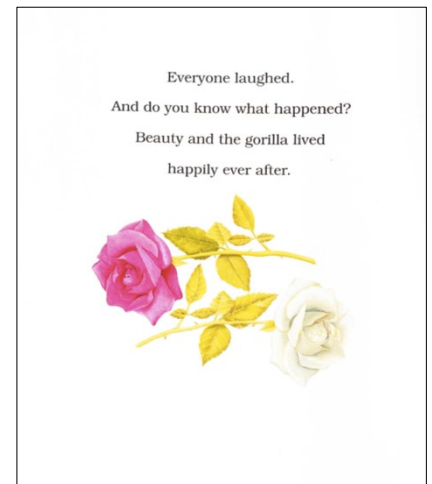Figure 19: mise en abyme (from: Little Beauty double spread 2)

Figure 20: mise en abyme (from: Little Beauty double spread 17)

Ultimately, the *mise en abyme* is not solely a metafictional device that draws the reader's attention towards the writing process of a picture book (Ommundsen 10). Readers may consider the *mise en abyme* to be a possibility, an alternative state of affairs within a textual actual world of a narrative. Furthermore, the complexity of the impossible *mise en abyme* can be overcome by PWT. Consequently, realizations of the *mise en abyme* in postmodern children's picture books can be integrated into the corpus of unnatural narratology.

5.1.3. Unnatural playful interaction

In chapter 3.2. it has been indicated that postmodern children's picture books are highly playful. Play in its non-literary form is an experimental performance which follows implicit rules (Morgenstern 72). Play is also often a parody; it tends to mock adult behavior (Morgenstern 75). When children play detective they imitate adult behavior while adding their own sense of humor to this activity (Morgenstern 75). They laugh, they smile, and their thumbs and index fingers may turn into pistols. These

fundamental aspects about play are incorporated into postmodern picture books in various distinct manners.

The notion of play especially appeals to postmodern writers due to its effects on the reading process. According to Morgenstern, play destroys *and* reconstructs meaning and sense (75). Hence, a playful picture book requires of the reader to consider different sense making strategies in order to create a meaningful narrative story world. Goldstone affirms this interpretation and describes the role of the reader in postmodern picture books as follows: "The reader/viewer has a clear mandate; think about this story, relate this story to other reading experiences, manipulate the story so it makes sense. Do not be shy, be a coauthor. Feel free to play with story, add to it and alter it" (324).

Playfulness in reading processes is frequently realized in postmodern children's picture books in the form of removable content (Goldstone 324). Thereby, the pages of these books turn into physical space, since they consist of elements that can be opened, pulled, and lifted by human hands (Watson 12), such as holes, pop-ups, fold-outs, lift-up flaps, and split pages (Grevie 384). Furthermore, picture books may contain material or information that does not immediately relate to the story world of these works (Mackery 327). This literary material can be classified as an add-on to the narrative (Mackery 327).

In postmodern picture books the concepts play and playfulness are synonymous with reader engagement and interaction (Grieve 377). As a matter of fact, postmodern children's literature deliberately makes the viewer take part in role-play activities, as the role of the reader in narrative processing is constantly re-defined (Grieve 375). Like in computer games, the viewer becomes an active agent in the development of plot within a story world, as he or she takes on the role of "a player and a co-creator" (Grieve 378).

Watson also argues that children's literature is a space where children "can engage in various kinds of shared and dynamic discourse" (11). This dynamic and unstable narrative environment requires its readers to be actively engaged in the story world (Grieve 377). Such interactive and playful narratives are highly suitable for child-

audiences (Nodelman 267). Minors tend to be exceedingly active and independent readers (Nodelman 267). Meaning making is one of their prime objectives and they often ignore repressive narrative structures that construct linear story worlds (Nodelman 267).

As a result, it can be stated that postmodern picture books are an experimental performance that follows certain implicit rules (Morgenstern 72). Furthermore, due to the physical interaction between reader and book, traditional reading procedures are being parodied. Whereas an adult intellectually digests a narrative, the child interacts and plays with it (Nodelman 267). Consequently, the picture book itself is transformed into "an object of play" (Morgenstern 79).

Manifestations of such interactive narrative play mainly serve a self-reflexive function (Grieve 377). They draw the reader's attention to the materiality of the book and portray literature in the making (Waugh 2). Grieve also posits that interactive games and play prompt the audience to think about the complex interplay between the fictional story world and reality (377). However, playfulness can also be interpreted in a different manner. The participant in a game, in an experimental performance, may also "play out" something that is lacking in the real world (Morgenstern 74), something that is not actual but merely possible. When playing detective, fingers can turn into weapons. Similar unnatural ontological realizations can be found in postmodern picture books.

One instance of playful interaction can be detected in Anthony Browne's *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* (2014). After the disappearance of various different characters and entities into the center of the picture book, Bella sends a letter to the audience addressing the reader directly (Byrne double spread 13). The letter instructs the viewer to turn the book and shake it in order to free the characters from their narrative prison (Byrne double spread 13). Hence, sense making is enforced via interaction, as the reader has to align the picture book in a vertical manner in order to establish a meaningful narrative sequence. Figure 21 shows the narrative action after the reader has turned the book.

It can therefore be argued that in the picture book the reader has to become an active agent in the unfolding of the plot, as the material foundations of the picture book are laid bare (Grieve 377). However, a further *non-metafictional* reading is possible. The reader-book interaction in Anthony Browne's picture book can also be classified as a manifestation of the unnatural. According to the laws of physics and logics characters cannot be trapped in the center of a book and readers cannot shake them out of it (Alber 25). Nevertheless, if *both* the picture book's center space *and* the superior story world of the picture book itself are textual actual and possible worlds within a pluralistic narrative universe, then the reader transitions into this system via physically interacting with it (Ryan 646). In this case, the story world of *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* (2014) would be a possible world of the actual world in which the reader is located. In this alternative world characters can disappear into the center of a picture book and readers can help them get out of it.
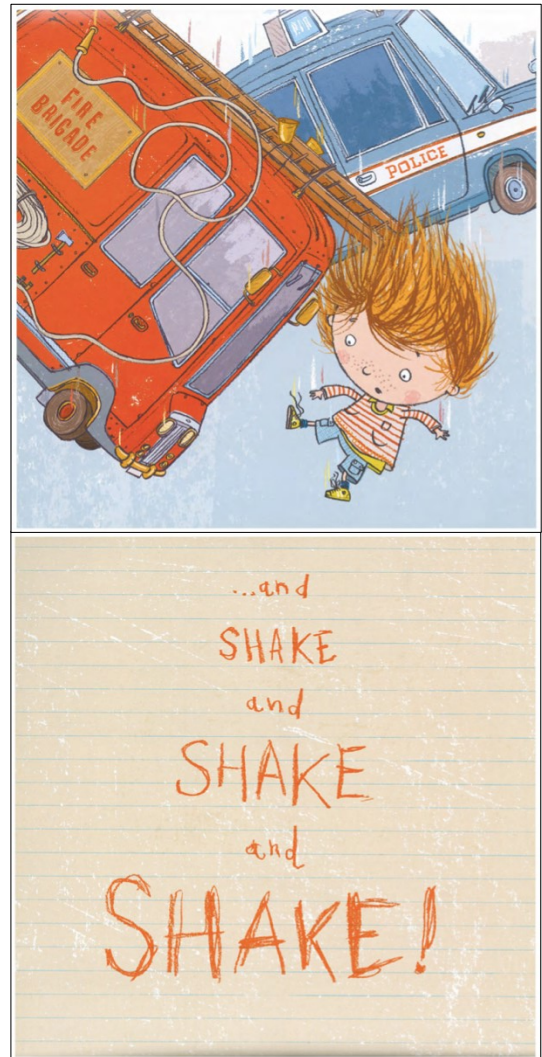

Figure 21: Playful interaction (from: *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* double spread 14)

Additional forms of interactive discourse can be found in Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005). On double spread five of the picture book, a small envelope is attached to the left-hand page (Gravett double spread 5). The reader can pull out a "West Bucks Public Burrowing Library" card from this envelope (Gravett double spread 5). Hence, human hands can physically interact with elements of the narrative (Watson 12).

Upon close inspection the reader can identify a serial number and the signature "GRR•WOL" on the said piece of paper (Gravett double spread 5) (see fig. 22). The card also contains the imprint of a used coffee mug (Gravett double spread 5). Gravett has quite sarcastically named the card "burrowing" instead of "borrowing" card (double

spread 5) which might indicate that whoever will borrow *Wolves* (2005) will quickly meet his or her demise. Nevertheless, wolves cannot lend books from libraries and humans cannot extract library cards from books borrowed by animals. This interaction is, therefore, unnatural (Alber 25).

Figure 22: Playful interaction (from: Wolves double spread 5)

The allocated information about the library card might also prompt the reader to consider that the book *Wolves* (2005) that rabbit borrows has been taken from the library before. The book was probably borrowed by the wolf himself which is indicated by the aforementioned signature. Using the library "burrowing card" as a stimulus, the reader may play out a possible world which is located in the textual actual world of *Wolves* (2005). In this possible world the wolf had borrowed *Wolves* (2005) before the rabbit did. Consequently, the reader plays out a possibility of something that is lacking in the textual universe itself (Morgenstern 75). Thereby, the reader complements a narrative universe in which the discourse about the story world is incomplete (Plamer 34).

Gravett placed another form of removable content on double spread 18 of her picture book (double spread 18). There, the reader can extract a letter from the verso (Gravett double spread 18) (see fig. 23). The letter is addressed to the rabbit protagonist of *Wolves* (2005) (Gravett double spread 18). It asks the rabbit to quickly return *Wolves* (2005) to the library as other rabbits are waiting to "burrow it" (Gravett double spread 18). The letter is signed by "L.Brerian" whose signature looks like a rabbit (Gravett double spread 18). Hence, the author of the postcard certainly is a rabbit himself.
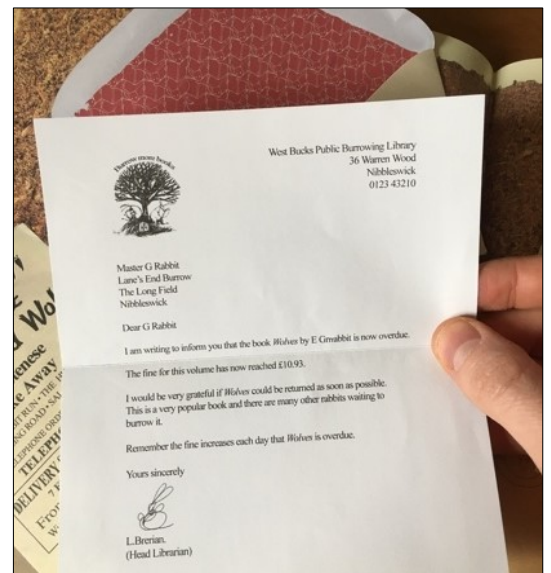

Figure 23: Playful interaction (from: Wolves double spread 18)

It is quite clear that rabbits cannot write postcards in human language and that humans cannot read these letters. Such animal-to-human interactions are impossible with

regard to real world parameters (Alber 25). Nevertheless, the letter may serve as an incentive to imagine a possible world within the textual actual world of *Wolves* (2005) where the said unnatural impossibility can be actualized. It can even be argued that the characters themselves legitimize this possible world (Lewis 85-6) because it is a fictional character who writes a letter to another fictional character. Thus, this possible story world is less dependent on the author of *Wolves* (2005) (Pavel 49) and *more* dependent on the reader who can imagine this alternative state of affairs in any way he or she intends to (Lewis 88).

Hornberg also proposes another form of interaction between picture book and reader which he terms "demand image" (n.p.). In these demand images gazes are firmly set on the audience in order to pull the viewer into the story world of the fiction (Hornberg n.p.). That is to say, the gaze from character to audience seems to ask the latter to participate (Hornberg n.p.). Consequently, "the reader is 'in'; challenged to take part and interact" (Hornberg n.p.).

Figure 24 shows a manifestation of such a demand image in David Wiesner's *Flotsam* (2006). In the scene the eye of the protagonist is presented in extreme close up while inspecting a crab (Wiesner, *Flotsam* double spread 3). The eye stares at the animal and at the audience. The crab's gaze is focused firmly on the viewer too (Wiesner, *Flotsam* double spread 3). Via these gazes, the reader is asked to engage in the picture book's story world (Hornberg n.p.). However, this form of picture-book-audience engagement is impossible and therefore

Figure 24: Demand image (from: Flotsam double spread 3)

unnatural. Characters cannot communicate with viewers via eye-contact. The laws of physics dictate that the ontology of fictional characters differs from actual human beings which renders interaction among the two entities impossible (Alber 25).
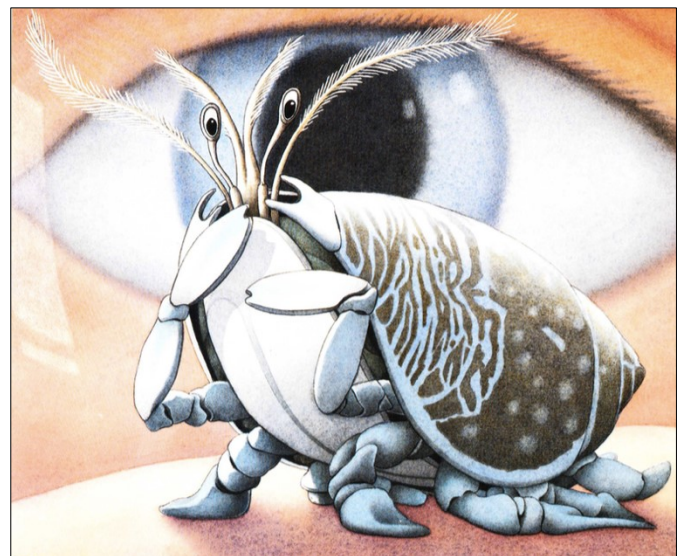
The demand image in *Flotsam* (2006) may, however, serve as a prompt to imagine alternative worlds. As the reader is demanded to interact with the story world, *Flotsam* (2006) becomes a possible world of the actual world where the viewer is physically located. Via the demand image, via this "gateway", the reader enters a literary world which is placed in a fictional narrative universe (Ryan 646). It can even be postulated that the demand image creates accessibility between the sphere of the reader and the narrative world of the picture book (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 31).

Another manifestation of a demand image can be found in Anthony Browne's *Little Beauty* (2008). Figure 25 depicts the gorilla protagonist, who signs to the zoo personnel (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spread 5). When the Gorilla points at himself his gaze is set onto the viewer (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spread 5). By doing so, the protagonist establishes direct eye contact between himself and the onlooker (Hornberg n.p.). The gorilla seems to sign to the zoo keepers *and* to the audience. This interaction is impossible as well (Alber 25). Fictional characters can only communicate with *other* fictional characters. They cannot respond to or interact with the reader.
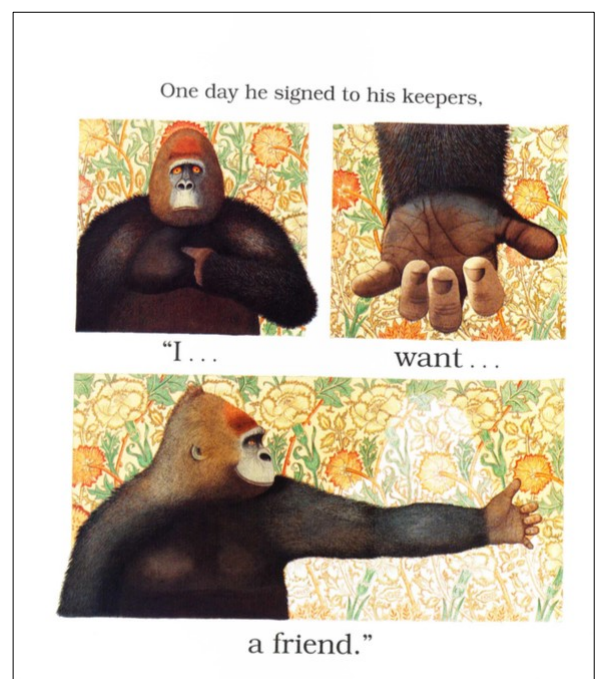

Figure 25: Demand image (from: Little Beauty double spread 5)

In a similar manner as in *Flotsam* (2006), the demand image may prompt the reader to consider the story world of *Little Beauty* (2008) to be an alternative state of affairs to the actual world. In this possible world the concrete boundaries between the real world and the picture book are conflated, as readers can step into fictional universes and characters can communicate with their observers from these universes. Eventually, this impossible interaction among actual and textual worlds enable the reader to "enter" the story world of *Little Beauty* (2008) (Palmer 33-4).

In conclusion, it can be argued that playful interaction does not solely serve a postmodern metafictional purpose. While Grieve proclaims that removable objects and

other manifestations of interactive discourse reflect on the material creation of books themselves (377), the analysis conducted in this chapter shows that touching and removing elements of a narrative story world can prompt readers to imagine alternative worlds. Furthermore, gazes render the concrete distinctions between reality and fiction unclear and invite the reader to enter the story worlds of picture books (Hornberg n.p.). Consequently, play and interaction provide the audience with a stimulus to "play out" possible worlds which are located in pluralistic narrative universes (Morgenstern 75).

5.1.4. Unnatural white spaces

White space, often termed blank or negative space, refers to an absence of background in literature (McHale 181). Originally, this literary device stems from visual poetry where white space supports written language (Brade 24). That is to say, negative space "acts as a verse segregator and also as an enabler of visual textual perception" (Brade 24). Thereby, additional meaning of words is created which are isolated and compressed by white space (Brade 24). In this spatial dimension new sense relations are established (Brade 24). Consequently, white space extends the concept of text into the realm of visual processing.

The concept of white space is also excessively applied in postmodern writing (McHale 181). In this context the device is used to draw the reader's attention to the material nature of the book in order "to show through the fiction" (McHale 181). Consequently, negative space fulfills a metafictional purpose in postmodern literature. Even Alber attributes a deconstructive, postmodern purpose to white space (189). The unnatural narratologist posits that negative space in literature renders the quest for meaning and sense-making by the reader impossible (Alber 189).

With regard to children's picture books, Nikolajeva offers an opportunistic classification of white space (*Interpretative Codes* 33). She argues that blank space is deliberately used by authors to centralize characters on the double spread (Nikolajeva, *Interpretative Codes* 33). This form of centering directly relates to the child-reader's tendency of self-centralization (Nikolajeva, *Interpretative Codes* 33). As a result, a link between fictional characters and child-audience is established, since both are centralized (Nikolajeva, *Interpretative Codes* 33). The perceptive spatial distance

between narrative space and reader space is reduced by establishing such a link (Nikolajeva, *Interpretative Codes* 33).

Anthony Browne's *Little Beauty* (2008) is a prime example of excessive use of blank space. The background of almost all of the picture book's double spreads is filled with negative space. Figure 26 illustrates how white space is used in *Little Beauty* (2008). The scene demonstrates how the gorilla protagonist is centralized on the recto of the double spread. While this use of blank space may serve a metafictional postmodern purpose (McHale 181), it has to be remarked that it also constitutes a manifestation of the unnatural. Animals that exist in white space, as it is suggested by *Little Beauty* (2008), are de facto non-

Figure 26: White Space (from: Little Beauty double spread 14)

viable in a biological sense. An ontological constellation where a gorilla inhabits white space is, therefore, physically impossible (Alber 25). Hence, an unnatural interpretation of white space can be conducted.

Concerning such an unnatural reading, Nikolajeva postulates that even though white space demands complex visual decoding, it transforms the role of the reader into that of an active participant in the creation of a story world (*Interpretative Codes* 64). Consequently, the absence of illustrated space may invite the viewer to imagine elements of a story world that are not expressed in the narrative itself. The audience may, thus, be prompted to imagine possible worlds in the textual actual world of *Little Beauty* (2008) on the basis of white space. Via this cognitive act of imagination, the reader adds further literary worlds to an incomplete narrative universe (Palmer 34). This interpretation is supported by the fact that human mental effort can construct almost anything in the realm of possibilia (Doležel 14).

David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001) contains other complex uses of white space. Hornberg argues that the picture book consists of extreme angles which invite the reader to transgress into the story world (n.p.). The scholar elaborates about the relationship between reader and angle in the following way: "the reader is positioned

in more involved angles as the book moves from traditional story board frames to the meta-story world that the pigs discover" (Hornberg n.p.). Thus, as soon as the pigs escape the traditional children's story and transition into white space, reader involvement is progressively increased.
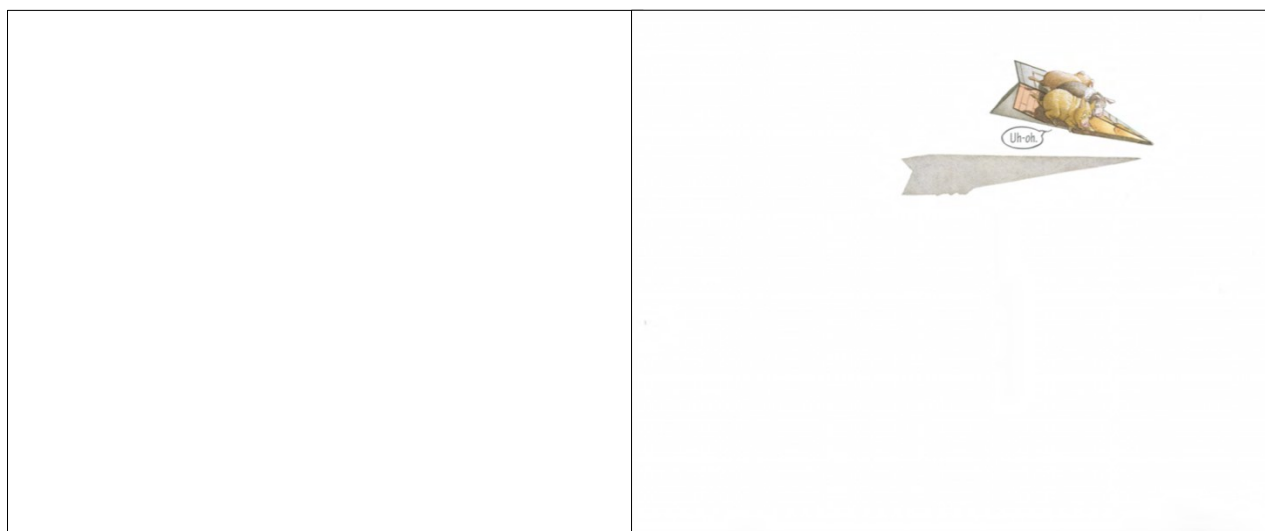

Figure 27: Extreme angle (from: The Three Pigs double spread 10)

Figure 27 depicts such an extreme angle in David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001). The double spread suggests a movement from verso to recto that the pigs conduct on a paper airplane (Wiesner double spread 10). This motion takes place on a horizontal axis, which mimics the reader's eye movement from left to right, while "the reader is left on the ground of the story world looking up" (Hornberg n.p.). Via complex cognitive decoding of this extreme angle, the reader is actively engaged in the story world and transgresses into it (Hornberg n.p.).

Hornberg's concept of extreme angels can also be classified as a manifestation of the unnatural. Pigs cannot fly paper airplanes through white space and human beings cannot literally step into a story world and watch the action unfold from the ground (Alber 25). The latter impossibility additionally constitutes a violation of the LNC because human beings cannot be in two states at the same time (Priest 418). They cannot be inside the story world, while holding the picture book in their hands where that same story world is located. Nevertheless, if the viewer interprets the scene in figure 27 as an alternative world of the actual world where he or she is located, then

such a transgression *is* possible. As a matter of fact, PWT permits the reader to breach the LNC and to enter such a fictional story world (Palmer 33-4).

As a result, it can be summarized that white space is a highly complex postmodern literary device (McHale 181). However, in picture books the effect of negative space is not reduced to self-reference. Blank space may prompt the reader to imagine possible worlds in incomplete narratives. Furthermore, unnatural angels may invite the audience to step into textual actual universes of picture books. In this case, picture books may turn into alternative worlds of the actual world itself.

5.2.   Intertextuality: an unnatural reading

It has been previously outlined in section 3.2. that intertextuality is a common feature of postmodern children's picture books. Due to the complexity of intertextuality, further analysis of this literary theory is necessary. In fact, philosophical considerations about the relation between texts are not solely a postmodern phenomenon (Ternès 11). In the science of literature studies, the said relation was investigated long before the emergence of the term "intertextuality" (Ternès 11).

Besides the fact that text-text relations have already been profoundly analyzed in literature studies, the novel term of intertextuality refers to the postmodern theory that artistic artifacts are not dependent on an original any longer, as the referents of a cultural object are *other* cultural objects (Allen 182-3). Hence, in postmodernity art is no longer an epitome of artistic creation but an apotheosis of cultural reproduction (Allen 182-3). Practices and codes used in the production of cultural artifacts are intertextual, as art models art in the creation of new art (Allen 183). Allen posits that such intertextual patterns are used in literature as well where they cause a profound loss of access to reality (183).

Moraru defines intertextuality in literature quite simply as the "presence of text A in a text B" (256). Within the context of a book, both text A and text B are related semantically (Moraru 257). The intertextual relations between the two texts can be classified according to categories, such as parody, pastiche, commentary, quotation, or travesty (Moraru 260).

While Moraru offers a basic definition of intertextuality, the scholar does not elaborate sufficiently upon the complicated issues of text and inter-text. Influential work in this field has been conducted by the *Tel Quel* group whose members argue that meaning is a product of text because meaning can only exist in the form of text (Ternès 13). This text may then be transformed and de- or re-constructed into a new text (Ternès 14). Ternès summarizes the group's theory in the following statement: "Jeder Text baut sich als Mosaik von Zitaten auf, jeder Text ist Absorption und Transformation eines anderen Textes" (14).

One of the members of the Tel Quel group was Roland Barthes who shows that text is the result of the productive relation between reader and *the written* (31). This reciprocal relationship occupies a space where *écriture* (writing) occurs (Barthes 31). Barthes further argues that "[t]ext functions as a transgressive activity which disperses the author as the centre, limit, and guarantor of truth, voice and pre-given meaning" (31). Consequently, text is a performative act to which numerous actants contribute (Barthes 31-2).

Barthes also puts forward that all texts are inter-texts because they always consist of some other text that was previously written (39). The philosopher shows that "[a]ny text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of codes, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc. pass into the text and are redistributed within it" (Barthes 39).

This relationship between text and text in an intertextual context is quite complex. According to intertextuality theories, an influenced text (text A) is a product which cannot exist without a textual precedent (text B) (Ternès 12). Text B, which exists prior to the subsequent text A, therefore, serves an existential purpose, while it remains unaffected by text A (Ternès 12).

In his works, Barthes additionally differentiates between *text* and *the work* (Barthes 39). The latter is always a physical object which can occupy space (Barthes 39). The former is a method of language (Barthes 39). Furthermore, text can be classified as a surface in a book which attempts to create unique meaning within a story world (Barthes 32).

Originally, text in its material form stabilized and secured *the work* and its intended meaning (Allen 62). The text was the material signifier of the work as signified (Allen 62). However, postmodernism has modified the aforementioned relation (Allen 67). Meaning within a postmodern text is always dependent on already existing meaning, since no word has one meaning alone in postmodernism (Allen 67). Allen further affirms Barthes' theories, as he argues that in postmodernism "the text not only sets going a plurality of meanings but is also woven out of numerous discourses and spun from already existent meaning" (67).

It is not solely postmodern writing which is intertextual, though (Moraru 260). The literary feature of intertextuality is present in various literary periods, such as classicism and romanticism (Moraru 260). However, postmodernism specifically foregrounds intertextuality as a condition for all forms of textuality (Mararu 261). Furthermore, the practice of intertextual writing was radicalized in postmodern literature (Ternès 15). For example, the visual assembly of various "foreign" textual materials on the surface of a book page is a typical feature of postmodern aesthetics (Ternès 15). In addition, the reference of literature to other literature is a self-referential process which causes literature to explore its own tradition (Ternès 12). Consequently, intertextuality may also serve a postmodern metafictional purpose.

It can be concluded that text does not exist in a postmodern book; it only exists between other texts (Barthes 39). Hence, postmodern literature is highly intertextual (Allen 68-9). While intertextual references are applied in various literary periods, postmodernism radicalized the use of intertextuality (Ternès 15). Furthermore, the intertextual nature of postmodern cultural products has changed the productive role of the reader in relation to text (Barthes 31-2). In literature intertextuality also causes loss of access to reality (Allen 183). In some cases, intertextuality serves a metafictional purpose (Ternès 12). Eventually, the high frequency of intertextual elements in postmodern picture books permits an analysis of this literary device from the perspective of unnatural narratology.

It is important to note that intertextuality in postmodern picture books appears in unnatural story worlds. In Lynne Cherry's *The Armadillo from Amarillo* (1994) foreign textual material is assembled on the double spread of the picture book (see fig. 28),

which is a characteristic feature of postmodern intertextuality (Ternès 15). Nevertheless, this constellation is impossible, since the narrative suggests that the "foreign" text was written by the armadillo Sasparillo (Cherry double spread 6). This intertextual reference violates the rules of physics and logics (Alber 25) because armadillos do not possess sufficient cognitive abilities to draft letters.

The placement of text within text in the aforesaid picture book does, however, create a plurality of meanings (Allen 67). The reader may decide that in a possible world within the textual actual narrative universe of *The Armadillo from Amarillo* (1994) an armadillo *can* write postcards and that these postcards *can* be placed randomly across the double spread. Consequently, intertextual features may be an incentive for the viewer to imagine alternative worlds within a narrative.
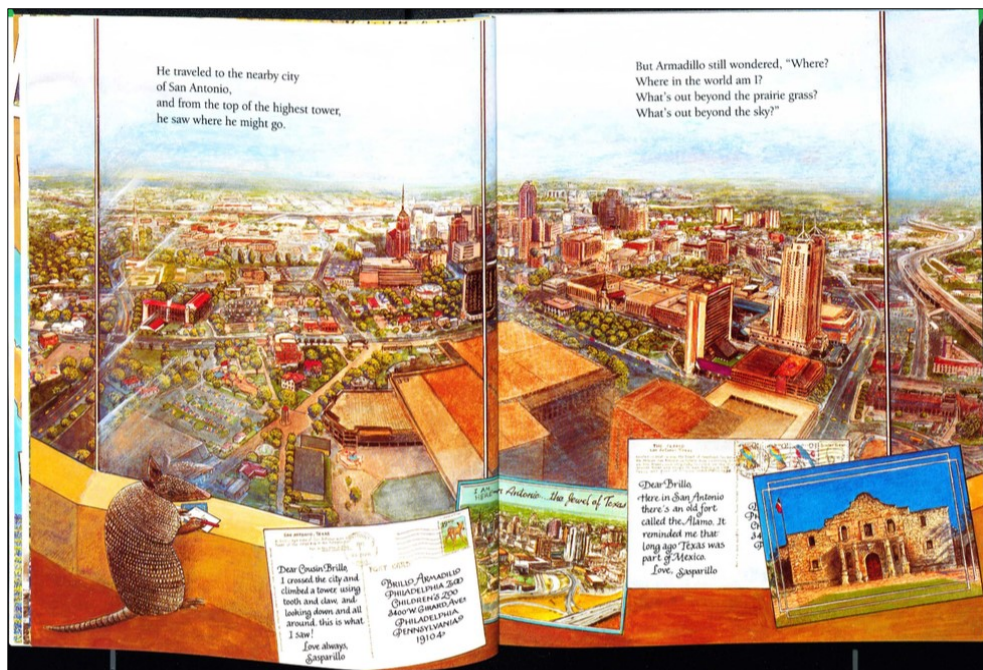

Figure 28: Intertextuality (from: The Armadillo from Amarillo double spread 6)

Other implications on intertextual possible worlds can be drawn from Arizpe et. al.'s child-reader study. Many participants in the survey on postmodern children's picture books made references among intertextual elements (Arizpe et. al. 218). When reading Oliver Jeffer's *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006), one test subject connected the metafictional background of the double spread to other elements of the narrative (Arizpe et. al. 218). The reader argued that a map, which is portrayed on the picture

book's surface, might indicate that Henry, the protagonist of the story world, travelled around the globe (Arizpe et. al. 218-19) (see fig. 29).

It can therefore be argued that the placement of one text within another text in an intertextual manner is a salient force in the construction of possible worlds. To the child viewer, the incomplete, impossible unnatural story world of *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006) was further complemented by intertextual references (Palmer 34). According to the child reader, Henry makes a journey through different countries, even though such a narrative is not explicitly enforced in the textual actual world of the picture book. Ultimately, the child reader constructed a possible narrative world on the basis of the material at hand (Alber 53). This sense-making scheme correlates highly with Alber's "Do it yourself" approach to textual impossibilities.
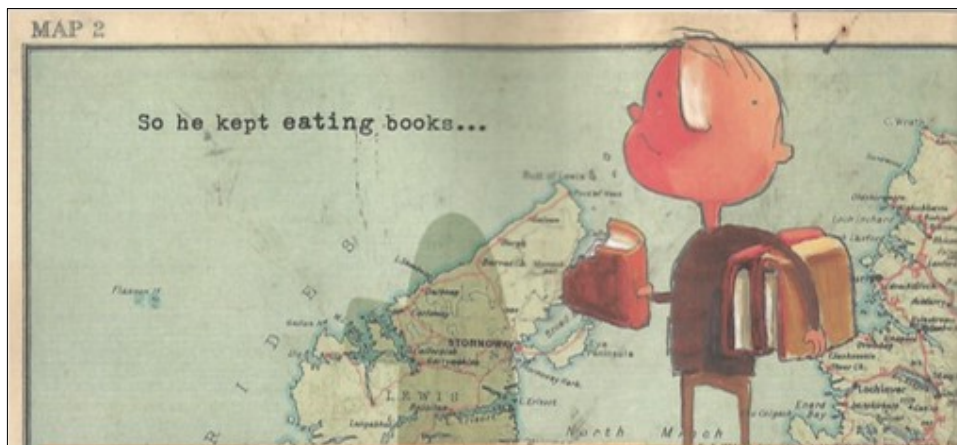

Figure 29: Intertextuality (from: The Incredible Book Eating Boy double spread 10)

In Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* (1998) intertextual reference to preexisting content is made in a very subtle manner. Figure 30 shows the final scene of the picture book's second voice (Browne ch. 2). If the viewer inspects the illustration closely, he or she can identify a monkey on one of the two houses located in the background of the image. The illustration may remind the reader of similar scenes in the movie King Kong. This intertextual King Kong motif may be a prompt to imagine numerous possible worlds within the textual actual world of *Voices in the Park* (1998). The reader may imagine a possible world where King Kong is somehow connected to the story world of the narrative, or King Kong and characters from *Voices in the Park* (1998) may simply share a possible world in a pluralistic narrative universe, although they are

manifest in different art forms. Eventually, the reader may imagine these possible worlds in any way he or she intends to (Lewis 88).

Figure 30: Intertextuality (from: Voices in the Park ch. 2)

Anthony Browne's *Little Beauty* (2008) also contains a subtle manifestation of the King Kong motif. Figure 31 depicts the gorilla and Beauty watching the movie King Kong together. Since the negative portrayal of monkeys in the film King Kong makes the gorilla mad, he breaks the TV on the subsequent page (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spread 13).

From a postmodern perspective the scene seems to affirm Barthes claim that all texts are intertextual (39). The narrative story world of *Little Beauty* (2008) actually depends on a preexisting text, namely King Kong, which remains unaffected by its implementation into a new narrative (Ternès 12). However, the intertextual scene also sets into motion unnatural sense-making. The reader may decide that in an alternative possible world, which is located in the textual actual narrative, gorillas and cats can cognitively grasp the complex content of King Kong and get mad about it. Furthermore, the viewer may imagine that *Little Beauty* (2008) is an alternative state of affairs of the

actual world (Doležel 16). This possible world is related to the actual world via the intertextual reference to King Kong. As a matter of fact, cats, gorillas, and King Kong exist in the actual world *and* in the possible world of *Little Beauty* (2008) – they simply undergo changes in the latter (Pavel 44).
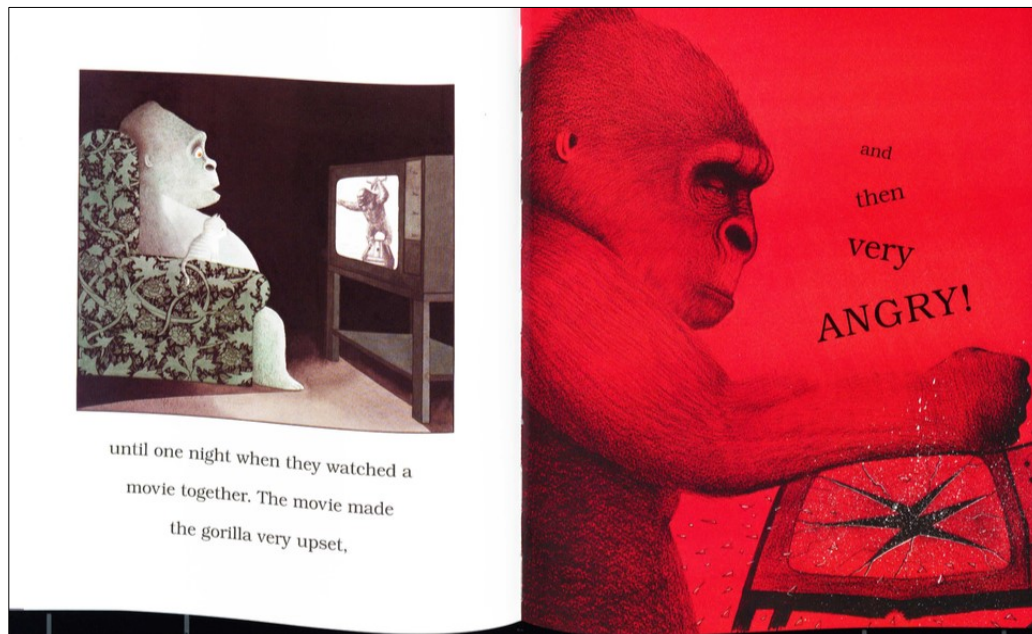

Figure 31: Intertextuality (from: Little Beauty double spread 13)

To conclude, the postmodern radicalization of intertextuality is an incentive for imagined alternative state of affairs. The author, as an institution that guarantees truth, is de-legitimatized (Barthes 39) because the viewer takes on a productive role in the creation of meaning. Especially in the context of unnatural story worlds within picture books, reference from one cultural object to another cultural object prompts the reader to create multiple narrative possible worlds. Furthermore, Allen's claim that intertextuality causes a loss of access to reality (67) can be refuted, as intertextuality seems to extend reality into the realm of possibilia when it is processed according to PWT.

5.3. Unnatural non-linear story worlds

One of the core structuring features of a narrative is linearity. Leech and Short argue that "[t]he overriding property of texts is linearity" (211). According to the scholars, linearity establishes order and hierarchy within a narrative (Leech and Short 212). These structural principles render some parts or sections of a text more important than

others (Leech and Short 212). The reader processes such texts and their structures according to set perceptive dynamics (Leech and Short 211).

Leitch affirms these claims, as he puts forward that narratives are essentially "based on a series of guesses about teleology which will make a narrative tellable" (63). The scholar further postulates that teleology is *the* central feature of narratives which prompts the audience to read and process a story (Leitch 63). Postmodernist literature tampers with these structuring principles of linearity and is often characterized by *non-linearity* (McHale 108).

According to McHale, non-linearity can appear in the form of self-erasing narratives (108). In these story worlds structured sequencing is fragmented by the development of two independent and mutually exclusive story lines (McHale 108). Other forms of disrupting linear narratives include loops which construct plot lines that are seemingly endless (McHale 108). In addition, one and the same event in a story world may happen at two distinct times (McHale 108). In this case, linearity is de-constructed and the reader has to decide which event he or she considers to be true or untrue (McHale 108).

Nevertheless, narratives which are constructed as endless loops of reoccurring events do not necessarily have to be meaningless (Leitch 64). Leitch proves this claim correct by referring to soap operas (64). He argues that this narrative format has hardly any authorial teleological ending because it proceeds as long as its audience desires it to proceed (Leitch 64). Furthermore, soap operas reduplicate the same narrative patterns and events multiple times (Leitch 64). Despite the fact that these cultural artifacts mimic endless circles, their audience has no problem deriving meaning from them (Leitch 65).

Besides postmodern transformations of story lines, non-linearity can also be realized by altering the structure of endings (McHale 109). In general, literary studies distinguish between closed and open endings (McHale 109). However, between open and closed endings there lie postmodern multiple and circular endings (McHale 109). Novels that have more endings than beginnings or books where alternative narratives

begin not in the "real" book but in the mind of a character are further examples of self-erasing literature (McHale 109).

Richardson puts forward that postmodern writers are also preoccupied with the deconstruction of temporality in story worlds (*Beyond Story and Discourse* 47). The narratologist posits that postmodern writers "clude, deny, or confound" the principles of linear temporality (Richardson, *Beyond Story and Discourse* 47). One manifestation of this form of narrative fragmentation are contradictory stories in which two incompatible events are placed on the same temporal continuum (Richardson, *Beyond Story and Discourse* 48).* Furthermore, Richardson identifies *antinomic* narratives where time moves backwards instead of forwards (*Beyond Story and Discourse* 49).* If one character ages more quickly or more slowly than another, temporality can be classified as *differential* (Richardson, *Beyond Story and Discourse* 50). Formally distinct time zones may also overlap and merge, that is to say, be *conflated* (Richardson, *Beyond Story and Discourse* 50-1). All of the aforesaid transformations of time in narratives contribute to the non-linearity of a text.

Non-linearity in writing is, however, not solely connected to temporal spheres. Concrete ties can be established between non-linear narratives and 20th century digitalization (Dresang 41). In reference to the computer age Ryan proposes the existence of digital textuality (*Narrative and Digitality* 515). According to the literary scholar, narratives can be classified as digital, if they serve a "text creating and text displaying" purpose (Ryan, *Narrative and Digitality* 515).

Ryan's argument is based on the premise that programs in a computer enable different forms of artistic expression (Ryan, *Narrative and Digitality* 515). Such software programs are dependent on hardware, namely the computer itself (Ryan, *Narrative and Digitality* 515). Ryan uses this reciprocal relationship between soft and hardware to establish an understanding of digital textuality (*Narrative and Digitality* 515). Hardware, an ontological foundation, enables new forms of display and perception in software authoring systems (Ryan, *Narrative and Digitality* 515).

Ryan further shows that computers exhibit four primary features (*Narrative and Digitality* 516). They are inter- and reactive, since they can respond to user input (Ryan,

Narrative and Digitality 516). Computers can also change signs, display, and colors in a highly fluid manner (Ryan, *Narrative and Digitality* 516). In addition, computers are the epitome of sensory perception (Ryan, *Narrative and Digitality* 516). They comprise all spheres of cognitive perception in themselves (Ryan, *Narrative and Digitality* 516). Eventually, computers provide the possibility to connect users globally in virtual space (Ryan, *Narrative and Digitality* 516).

In the field of literature, conservative writers hardly apply the aforesaid features because they limit the control over the narrative by the author and tend to deconstruct meaning (Ryan, *Narrative and Digitality* 516). Nevertheless, digital textuality is realized in the form of hypertext by various postmodern authors (Schneider 198). In this new mode of literary reception, production, and distribution, literature seems to mimic the key concepts of computers, which Ryan proposes, in the format of books (Schneider 197-8). One central effect of the appliance of these features is non-linearity (Schneider 197-8). As a matter of fact, hypertexts contain a plurality of links or options that can be selected during the cognitive reception of a narrative, which are similar to choice-making patterns on websites or in computer games (Schneider 198). Consequently, the reader can decide between different narrative alternatives and story lines within a narrative universe (Schneider 198).

It can be summarized that postmodern narratives may contain different manifestations of non-linearity. This postmodern literary tendency is realized by teleological (McHale 108-9) and temporal transformations (Richardson, *Beyond Story and Discourse* 47-51). Non-linearity in literature is also apparent in the form of hypertext, which applies innovative notions of the digital age to books (Schneider 198). These computer-like narratives limit the author's control over his or her creation and deconstruct meaning (Ryan, *Narrative and Digitality* 516). In the following, postmodern theories about non-linearity and its deconstructive purpose will be re-evaluated.

In postmodern children's picture books, different forms of non-linearity can be detected. There, they prompt the creation of impossible unnatural narratives which can be decoded by applying PWT. David Wiesner's *Flotsam* (2006), for example, consist of an endless narrative loop (McHale 108). In the wordless picture book, a young boy finds a magical underwater camera in the ocean (Wiesner, *Flotsam* double spread 7).

Next to pictures of a fantasy underwater world, the device contains photos of young children who previously found the same underwater camera (Wiesner, *Flotsam* double spread 13). This machine connects the lives of various children over a wide time span (Dresang 49). Eventually, the silent protagonist of *Flotsam* (2006) throws the magical underwater camera back into the ocean (Wiesner, *Flotsam* double spreads 16-7). When the story of the picture book "ends" the camera is found by another girl (Wiesner, *Flotsam* double spread 21) (see fig. 32).

Figure 32: Non-linear loop (from: Flotsam double spread 21)

From the story line of the picture book it can be concluded that *Flotsam* (2006) has no ending per se. It rather consists of an endless postmodern loop, as proposed by McHale (108). This theory is supported by the fact that the final double spread of the picture book suggests that more and more children will find the magical underwater camera. The nameless protagonist is simply one of many children in this continuum. This interpretative pattern can even be replicated *ad infinitum*. However, the non-linear ending of David Wiesner's *Flotsam* (2006) can also be classified as a realization of the unnatural.

While the act of finding an underwater camera is not an unnatural phenomenon per se, the appliance of postmodern non-linearity promotes the existence of a story world which is unnatural on a macro level (Biwu 177). Mermaids riding squid wards in an underwater town in *Flotsam* (2006) are *de facto* impossible in relation the known laws of physics and logic (Alber 25). The loop-ending of the picture book reinforces this unnatural story world. This reading is further supported by the fact that the unnatural elements of *Flotsam* (2006) – the magical underwater world where sea creatures exhibit human-like behavior – are placed in a natural narrative environment, namely that of a young boy finding a camera on the beach (Wiesner, *Flotsam* double spread

7). Consequently, the loop-ending of *Flotsam* (2006) may prompt the reader to consider that he or she may be next in line to find the said camera. If the reader decides to believe in such an alternative state of affairs (Ryan 646), then the picture book *Flotsam* (2006) is a possible world of the actual world itself (Doležel 16).

Another realization of non-linearity can be detected in David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001). In the picture book's story world, the protagonists conduct various metaleptic movements into distinct narratives. Thereby, the different time zones of these story worlds are conflated (Richardson, *Beyond Story and Discourse* 50-1). Figure 33 depicts a scene where the pigs leave a story world they had previously transgressed into (Wiesner double spread 13). A cat follows them and exits this story world too (Wiesner double spreads 13-4). Even though the characters conflate the time zones of distinct narrative story worlds (Richardson, *Beyond Story and Discourse* 50-1), linearity is not fragmented. The pigs' and the cat's transition from one time zone to another may simply be considered to be a possibility within a story world that can be classified as impossible as a whole (Biwu 177). Hence, in possible worlds within the textual actual world of *The Three Pigs* (2001) time can be conflated without obstructing linearity.
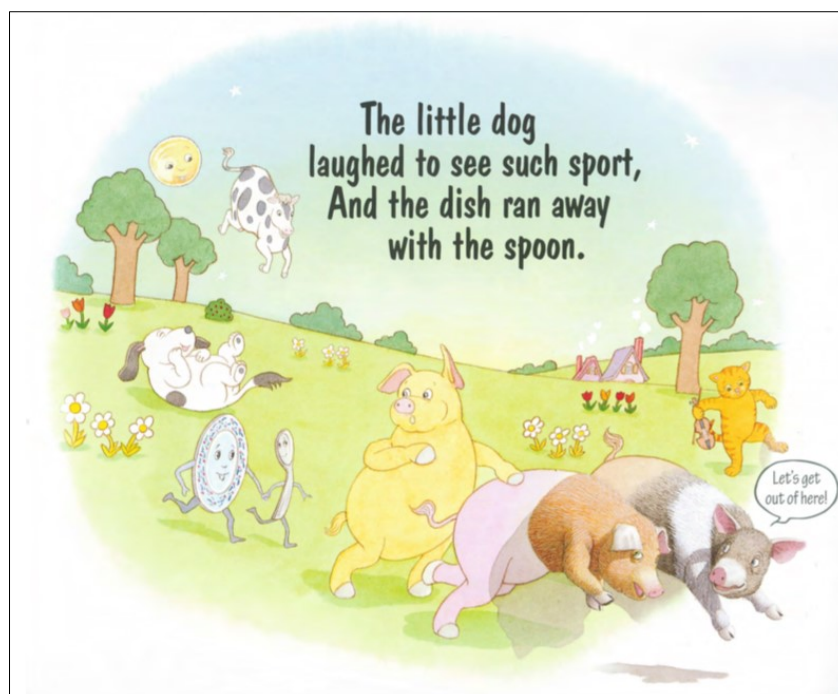

Figure 33: Conflated time zone (from: The Three Pigs double spread 13)

In Lynne Cherry's *The Armadillo from Amarillo* (1994) the audience can find other manifestations of non-linearity, since the author seems to employ elements of a hypertext. On the final double spread of the children's book Sasparillo, the curious armadillo, finally learns where in a gigantic universe he is from (Cherry double spread 18). The double spread shows Saspariallo, his eagle friend, and various other materials like postcards, maps, a globe, a camera, and a poster depicting the solar system (Cherry double spread 18) (see fig. 34). The scene can be classified as a hypertext that contains different links which the reader can choose from (Schneider 198). These links may trigger possible worlds within the textual actual universe of *The Armadillo from Amarillo* (1994). As a matter of fact, the hypertext display consists of possible worlds which are not explicitly realized in the textual actual world of the picture book, such as post cards from the Philadelphia Zoo (Cherry double spread 18). Consequently, these hypertextual elements may prompt the reader to imagine an alternative state of affairs within the narrative universe of *The Armadillo from Amarillo* (1994) in which Sasparillo visited the Philadelphia Zoo. In a similar manner as in David Wiesner's *Flotsam* (2006), the postmodern manifestation of non-linearity in Lynne Cherry's children's book is not unnatural per se but aids in the cognitive construction of further unnatural story worlds.
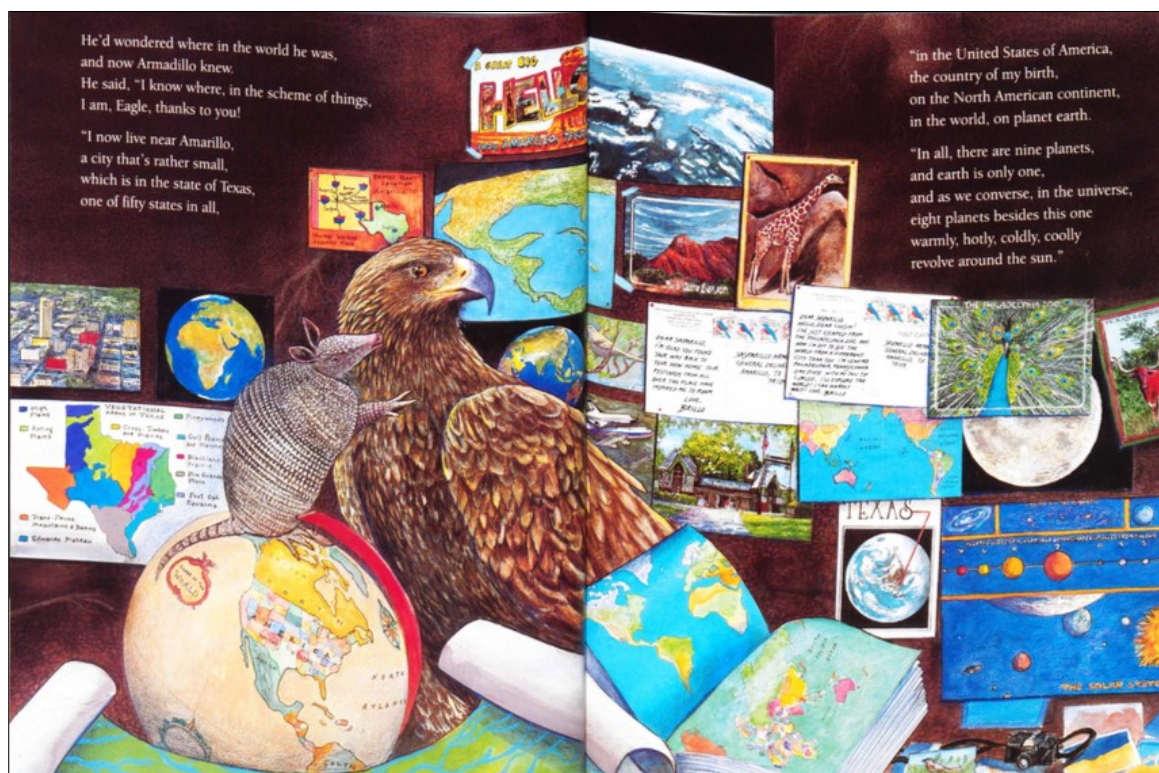

Figure 34: Hypertext (from: The Armadillo from Amarillo double spread 18)

The audience can also discover a form of computer-like display in Anthony Browne's *Little Beauty* (2008). Whereas most of the double spreads in the picture book contain only limited contextual information, as background is usually filled with blank space, figure 35 shows a scene which only consist of minor instances of white space. The wall of the gorilla's home is suddenly embellished in a beautiful flower ornament and a romantic picture is placed on it (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spread 11). The color scheme on Gorilla's fur has become lighter (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spread 11). Inside the protagonist's room there also seems to be a couch, a TV, and a lamp (Browne, *Little Beauty* double spread 11). Interpreting the double spread as a computer screen, it can be inferred that various unexpected, fluid changes in signs and color occur in the scene (Ryan, *Narrative and Digitality* 16). These alternations in representation are, however, not *only* a postmodern manifestation of digital textuality but a manifestation of a possible world in the textual actual universe of *Little Beauty* (2008). In this possible world, the gorilla lives in a house where color schemes and inventory can change without warning, even though such a world is de facto impossible with regard to the laws of physics and logics (Alber 25).

Figure 35: Digital textuality (from: Little Beauty double spread 11)

Ultimately, the analyses in this chapter puts forward that postmodern realizations of non-linearity in children's picture books do not necessarily contribute to the

fragmentation of sequencing in narratives. As specified above, non-linearity may enforce the creation of unnatural possible worlds. When postmodern writers use endless loops, conflating time zones, hypertext, or digital textuality to tamper with the linearity of a narrative, they provide further opportunities for imagining alternative state of affairs in pluralistic textual universes. That is to say, when non-linearity occurs the unnatural flourishes. Furthermore, by applying PWT, sense can be deducted from non-linear events that fragment the reading process.

6. Conclusion: towards an unnatural picture book

The primary objective of this diploma thesis was to investigate whether readers can make sense of impossible phenomena in postmodern children's picture books. The secondary aim of this study was to examine if sense-making strategies that readers apply to the aforementioned impossibilities permit a reassessment of postmodern literary concepts about deconstruction, self-referentiality and fragmentation. Furthermore, this thesis analyzed whether postmodern picture books can be integrated into the corpus of unnatural narratology.

Literary research was carried out on 9 different postmodern picture books. In these books metalepsis, *mise en abyme*, playful interaction, white space, intertextuality, and non-linearity were re-evaluated. In order to conduct this re-classification, theories from the field of unnatural narratology and PWT were applied. The former served as a categorization scheme for postmodern impossibilities. The latter was used as a sense-making strategy.

A preliminary finding of this thesis is that theories about the deconstructive, self-referential, and fragmenting function of postmodern literary devices can be refuted. PWT allows readers to overcome these postmodern impossibilities and their effects. In some cases, metalepsis, *mise en abyme*, playful interaction, white space, intertextuality, and non-linearity may even prompt readers to complement incomplete and fragmented narratives via possible worlds. In other cases, unnatural impossible phenomena transform textual actual worlds into extensions of reality itself. Research results also show that impossibilities are a pervasive feature in postmodern children's literature. Since these unnatural conundrums can be cognitively deciphered by the

reader, the analyzed picture books can be integrated into the corpus of unnatural narratology.

Although various manifestations of postmodern literary devices were reassessed in the course of this diploma thesis, a generalization of the study's re-categorization scheme remains difficult to conduct due to the fact that research was limited to 9 picture books. Nevertheless, PWT sense-making strategies proposed in this thesis may serve as a model for future research on postmodern children's literature or other literary genres and periods. Since this is the first study on unnatural children's literature, it may serve as an incentive for other literary scholars to rethink the concept of postmodernism in children's picture books.

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8. Appendix

Abstract English

Postmodern children's picture books are widely regarded as self-referential, fragmented, and deconstructed cultural artifacts among literary scholars. In addition, it is argued that postmodern children's literature contains numerous contradictions and impossibilities that the reader cannot make sense of. However, these postmodern notions about picture books can be challenged via a modern approach to literary studies named unnatural narratology and by applying possible world theories (PWT) to postmodern narrative conundrums. Based on these two theoretical concepts, this diploma thesis re-categorizes *postmodern* children's picture books as *unnatural* children's picture books. Moreover, it provides numerous PWT-strategies that readers may use to cope with contradiction and impossibility in postmodern picture books. This re-evaluation of postmodern theorems will be conducted in Lynne Cherry's *The Armadillo from Amarillo* (1994), Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* (1998) and *Little Beauty* (2008), Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005), Oliver Jeffers' *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006), David Wiesner's *Flotsam* (2006) and *The Three Pigs* (2001), Meg McKinlay's and Leila Rudge's *No Bears* (2013), and Richard Byrne's *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* (2015). In these picture books metalepsis, *mise en abyme*, playful interaction, white space, intertextuality, and non-linearity will be critically analyzed in reference to PWT and unnatural narratology. Ultimately, this thesis will reveal that all of the abovementioned postmodern literary strategies and devices are manifestations of the unnatural. These unnatural phenomena do not deconstruct or fragment story worlds but construct pluralistic narrative universes. These literary universes are placed in the realm of possibilia where reality exceeds the scope of human embodiment, where the impossible can be actualized.

Abstract Deutsch

Postmoderne Bilderbücher für Kinder werden von vielen Literaturwissenschaftlern und Literaturwissenschaftlerinnen als fragmentierte, dekonstruierte, und selbst-referenzielle kulturelle Artefakte klassifiziert. Des Weiteren wird postuliert, dass postmoderne Kinderliteratur Gegensätze und Unmöglichkeiten enthält, die der Leser, die Leserin nicht erklären, nicht überkommen kann. Eben diese postmodernen Theorien können jedoch durch moderne literaturwissenschaftliche Strömungen wie die „Unnatural Narratology" und durch die Anwendung „Möglicher Welten Theorien" widerlegt werden. Basierend auf diesen beiden philosophischen, wissenschaftlichen Konzepten wird diese Diplomarbeit eine Re-klassifizierung postmoderner Bilderbücher für Kinder in den Korpus der „Unnatural Narratology" vornehmen. Außerdem wird diese Arbeit verschiedene Lesestrategien, die auf der Theorie der Möglichen Welten aufbauen, postulieren, welche Leserinnen und Leser nutzen können, um postmoderne Unmöglichkeiten und Gegensätze zu dekodieren. Diese Re-evaluierung wird in Lynne Cherrys *The Armadillo from Amarillo* (1994), Anthony Brownes *Voices in the Park* (1998) und *Little Beauty* (2008), Emily Gravetts *Wolves* (2005), Oliver Jefferss *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006), David Wiesners *Flotsam* (2006) und *The Three Pigs* (2001), Meg McKinlays und Leila Rudges *No Bears* (2013), und Richard Byrnes *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* (2015) vorgenommen. In diesen Bilderbüchern werden literarische Manifestationen von Metalepsis, der *mise en abyme*, von spielerischer Interaktion, von weißem Hintergrund, von Intertextualität, sowie von Non-Linearität kritisch analysiert. Schlussendlich zeigt diese Arbeit auf, dass die eben genannten postmodernen Schreibstrategien Verkörperungen unnatürlicher Phänomene sind. Diese dekonstruieren oder fragmentieren die narrativen Welten der Kinderbücher jedoch nicht, sondern konstruieren pluralistische, literarische Universen. Diese Kosmen sind im Reich des Möglichen platziert, wo Realität über menschliches Verständnis hinaus erweitert wird, wo das Unmögliche realisiert werden kann.