


## Intertextuality and children's literature. Dialogues between texts in the study of picture books

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### Abstract


A critical review of the concept of intertextuality allows us to broaden our gaze on the dialogical links that literary texts establish with each other. Beyond citations or textual references, the works are interrelated at a discursive, formal, and thematic level, sharing genre traits, construction techniques, and themes that allow literature to be conceived as an infinite network of connections. These links must be explored from comparative literature, which as a discipline provides a contrastive methodology capable of approaching texts from their intertextual transcendence. This article addresses the transfer of the theory of intertextuality and comparative literature to the field of Children's and Youth Literature, to undertake a study of picture books. From these parameters, an analysis model has been built based on the discursive, morphological, and thematological links that relate works to others. The application of this model sheds new light, not only on the critical examination of the texts but also on the didactic effects because network reading challenges the reader to assume new learning and develop skills that enrich their literary training.

**Keywords:** Children's literature; picture books; intertextuality; comparative literature; literary education.

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## Intertextualidad y literatura infantil. El diálogo entre textos en el estudio del álbum ilustrado

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### Resumen

Una revisión crítica del concepto de “intertextualidad” permite ampliar la mirada sobre las asociaciones dialógicas que los textos literarios establecen entre sí. Más allá de las citas o las referencias textuales, las obras se interrelacionan a nivel discursivo, formal y temático, compartiendo rasgos de género, técnicas constructivas y temas que permiten concebir la literatura como una red infinita de conexiones. Esos vínculos deben ser explorados desde la literatura comparada que, como disciplina, proporciona una metodología contrastiva capaz de aproximarse a los textos desde su trascendencia intertextual. Este artículo aborda la traslación de la teoría de la intertextualidad y la literatura comparada al ámbito de la literatura infantil y juvenil, con el objetivo de emprender un estudio del álbum ilustrado. Desde esos parámetros, se ha construido un modelo de análisis diseñado en base a los nexos discursivos, morfológicos y temáticos que ponen en relación unas obras con otras. La aplicación de ese modelo arroja nueva luz no solo sobre el examen crítico de los textos, sino también sobre los efectos didácticos, porque una “lectura en red” reta al lector a asumir nuevos aprendizajes y a desarrollar habilidades que vienen a enriquecer su formación literaria.

**Palabras clave:** Literatura infantil; libro álbum; intertextualidad; literatura comparada; educación literaria.

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## INTERTEXTUALITY IN CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

In his story "The Library of Babel", Jorge Luis Borges presents the metaphor of the universe as a great library built on an infinite number of hexagonal galleries, eternal and unlimited, capable of containing all books. Man lives a pilgrimage from one hexagon to another, because one book leads to another book in a recurrent and infinite process.

This story is perhaps one of the most beautiful narrative representations of the idea of "intertextuality". Years later, Umberto Eco would evoke Borges's dream in *The Name of the Rose* through Adso's reflections when he first enters the magnificent abbey library where the novel is set. It is then that he discovers that books talk to each other, so that the library contains a timeless murmur, a dialogue between texts that makes it a living thing,

"a receptacle of powers not to be ruled by a human mind, a treasure of secrets emanated by many minds, surviving the death of those who had produced them or had been their conveyors" (Eco, 2004, p. 306).

Approaching the literary text from its intertextual nature means analysing it through the relationship it establishes with one or more other texts. The work is thus conceived as an open entity in constant dialogue with other works. And this idea, in turn, brings us back to the notion of literature as a great dialogical universe, in which each text is a link in a communicative chain. Beyond geographical or temporal classifications, the books establish infinite links between themselves and refer to each other through multiple strategies such as rewriting works, adapting thematic motifs or imitating techniques and forms.

Methodologically, the theory of intertextuality is linked to Comparative Literature, a discipline of literary studies that attempts to approach texts not from historical criteria, but by conceiving them as manifestations of a universal cultural phenomenon that transcends national borders. It is not intended to be an analysis governed by geo-chronological guidelines, but by conceptual frameworks -understood as such forms, genres, themes and topics-, which cut across different literatures in a supranational dialogue in which we do not speak of influences but of intertextual relations, beyond chronological, national or linguistic boundaries. Comparative literature proposes the need to analyse texts from their dialogical connections, not "in" but "through" time and space, because the richness of themes, genres and forms is not extinguished by locating them in a specific time and space (Guillén, 1985).

When the parameters associated with the theory of intertextuality and comparative literature are applied to the field of children's and young adult literature (hereinafter C&YAL), interesting lines of research open up, both at the level of the critical study of works and at the level of reflection on literary education. According to Tabernero, the presence of intertextuality in C&YAL cannot be denied at all, for the intertextual perspective is one of the broadest channels through which children's and young adult literature is renewed by offering new cultural and literary models (as cited in Mendoza-Fillola, 2008).

According to Mendoza-Fillola (2001), the texts of the C&YAL have an undeniable intertextual character, since they evoke identifiable discursive archetypes in two dimensions: at the formal level (genre peculiarities, discursive conventions) and at the content level (thematic and argumentative references, specific quotations). This means that, thanks to this condition of intertextuality, the C&YAL is able to project and maintain values, forms, structures and referents of literary culture (Mendoza-Fillola, 2001).

All this is of great importance not only from a critical point of view, but also, and more importantly, from a didactic one. Literary education in intertextuality means training readers to discover and interpret textual connections. It means no longer reducing the teaching of literature to chronological schemes and extensive lists of dates, but rather, as Moreno-Catena advocates, approaching it from a comparative point of view that takes into account multiple intertextualities, selecting definite thematic, generic, even technical frameworks, as opposed to this linear, diachronic history, full of titles and absorbing names that do not lead to knowledge (Moreno-Catena, 2008).

Intertextuality thus offers a renewal of the ways of relating to tradition and to the act of reading itself, overcoming an encyclopaedic model of teaching and making it possible to approach texts from the dialogue established between them, in line with the designs of textual itineraries included in the new academic curricula.

In the field of C&YAL, one of the most relevant genres for intertextual analysis is the picture book. Defined as the main sphere of manifestation of postmodern innovations (Silva-Díaz, 2005), its multiple artistic and didactic possibilities offer ample fields for exploration, especially from the perspective of dialogical relations. Postmodern art is concerned with the aesthetic possibilities of transgressing boundaries in a process of exploring limits, and this breaking of conventions also reaches C&YAL, introducing a tendency to experiment with artistic forms (Colomer, 2005). Intertextuality will become one of the most representative resources of postmodern aesthetics, characterised by the deliberate integration of intertextual games, which on many occasions will obey a subversive intentionality of transgressing conventions consecrated as canonical by tradition (Mendoza-Fillola, 2012).

In this production environment, picture books are one of the most representative manifestations of postmodern children's literature, introducing a new artistic expression resulting from the interrelation of image, word and materiality. As Bellorín-Briceño (2015) points out, because of their very dialogical nature, picture books are conducive to the rehearsal of cross-discourses and concepts, an ideal genre for:

- comparative studies, thanks to its multimodal nature and its extraordinary capacity to interrelate discursive techniques, constructive strategies and artistic codes;
- intertextual studies, because of their tendency to evoke other literary texts or artistic works.

Our proposal focuses on applying the parameters of intertextuality theory and comparative literature to the study of picture books, aimed at constructing an analytical model that can be used both as a tool for critical exploration of texts and for monitoring the effects of intertextuality in reading education.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK. CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE IDEA OF “INTERTEXTUALITY”.**

The origins of theoretical studies on intertextuality go back to Bakhtin's ideas on the dialogical nature of the literary text. Based on these reflections, Kristeva coined the term in an article published in the journal *Critique* (no. 239) in 1967, entitled “Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman”. In her analysis of Bakhtin's Dialogism, Kristeva writes that every text must be conceived as a mosaic of quotations from other texts, thus beginning to articulate the Theory of Intertextuality, which will mark a whole new theoretical line of approach to discourse.

Intertextuality is evidence of a condition inherent to the nature of all texts: the tendency to establish connections. Therefore, literary works cannot be conceived from their own immanence, but as intertextual artefacts (Mendoza-Fillola, 2008) subsumed into a labyrinthine fabric in which they absorb other textualities. Any book thus becomes a long succession of other books whose covers we may never see and whose authors we may never know, but whose echo is found in the one we hold in our hands (Manguel, 2001).

Since this initial formulation, many theorists have attempted to systematise the idea of “intertextuality”, with the aim of establishing a typology and delimiting its functionality. For González-Álvarez (2003), these advances reached a turning point in 1976, when the journal *Poétique* devoted a monograph to the subject that marked the beginning of what could be called the post-Kristevian era. From this point on, a theoretical scope is defined and exemplified through practical contributions. In 1982, one of the most significant contributions came from Genette, who incorporated the idea of “transtextuality” and defined it as everything that places the text in relation, manifestly or secretly, with other texts (Genette, 1989). He distinguishes five types of transtextual relationships that coexist and intertwine with each other:

- Intertextuality: relationship of co-presence between two or more texts.
- Paratextuality: the relationship between a text and its paratext.
- Metatextuality: a relationship that links a text to another text that talks about it.
- Hypertextuality: relationship linking a text B or hypertext to a previous text A or hypotext.
- Architextuality: reference that a text makes to a set of works, generally grouped under a genre.

Genette thus establishes a taxonomy of textual interrelations, and identifies intertextuality as a form of transtextuality in which a text refers, explicitly or implicitly, to one or more other texts. This is still the idea that today is included in the second meaning of the term in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* (Royal Spanish Academy Dictionary): use of other people's texts in one's own text, explicitly or implicitly.

The reflections of the German rhetorician Plett (1991) will make a major contribution to making intertextuality a tool of analysis. Its starting point is the very etymology of the term, which appeals to the condition of the text as a fabric or network (the Latin prefix *inter-* refers to the idea of reciprocity, interconnection, interweaving; the word "text" comes from the Latin *texere*, which means to weave or interweave). This reticular vision leads Plett to affirm that, in order to analyse the intertextual significance of texts, two different types of intertextuality must be taken into account (Galván-Reula, 1997):

- Material intertextuality: this could be defined as the importation or reproduction of an identifiable source text into another text (Ivanic, 2004).
- Structural intertextuality: this consists of the use of techniques that are part of the writer's abstract knowledge and, therefore, the direct presence of a source-text is not perceived (Ivanic, 2004).

The "material intertextuality" Plett (1991) refers to would be close to Genette's notion: the presence of one text or texts in another, through various forms such as quotation or allusion. "Structural intertextuality" returns to the very etymology of the word and makes it possible to speak of associations that are not limited to the reference between texts, but also contemplate links on a structural or morphological level. Thus conceived, intertextuality is defined as the relationship that a text establishes with another or others by means of various procedures, according to the meaning of the term, in its first meaning, in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*.

Therefore, considering intertextuality as an instrument of textual analysis entails a revision of the concept from a more pragmatic point of view. In this sense, significant advances have been made in the English-speaking world, where studies on intertextuality have been approached from the point of view of systemic functional linguistics. It is precisely a systemicist, Lemke (1985), who proposes an intertextual typology to analyse the relationships established between texts:

- Generic: those linking texts that belong to the same genre.
- Thematic: configured through thematic systems that are born, maintained and transformed.
- Structural: those that take place at a syntagmatic level.
- Functional: those that are established within a community as a social practice.

The study of textual associations cannot therefore be limited to the presence of some texts in others; because it must address both a "semantic" level (relations of motifs, ideas and contents) and a "semiotic" level (relations of genres, symbols, forms and structures), under a theoretical line that considers transtextual operations in their full breadth (Camarero-Arribas, 2008). Intertextuality must approach rhetoric, grammar and pragmatics in order to become a "scientific" method, an operational instrument,

a rigorous analytical tool for the study of the interconnections that texts establish with each other (Galván-Reula, 1997).

## ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

In order to construct the model of analysis that we present, we have used a qualitative methodology articulated around three axes:

- Theory of intertextuality. Parameters of analysis have been defined that include everything that, on a thematic, structural or technical level, places the text in relation to other texts. For in addition to the processes of allusion or rewriting, one must also consider thematic connections, as well as those related to modes of construction, formal strategies and even material elements.
- Comparative literature. It has allowed us to study the framework of the relationship with picture books and to define what we could call its “invariants” as a genre, by which we mean those structural, supra-temporal, constant and typical elements of the genre which must allow us, in the comparison of literary works, to go beyond all 'historical coincidences' and cultural barriers (Berger, 1984).
- Critic specialising in picture books. Classifying picture books as a genre is not easy: they are heterogeneous books in which there is no thematic, aesthetic or formal unity, and this lack of unity makes them a strange tribe of books (Sáez-Castán, 2016). It is precisely intertextuality that legitimises categorisation; not for nothing does Lewis state that what counts is a network of family resemblances that links individual examples of picture books (quoted in Silva-Díaz, 2005). As in other literary genres, the repeated presence of narrative resources and strategies is a sign of the effects of intertextuality (Mendoza-Fillola, 2001).

In addition to the theoretical and methodological framework, in order to design the analysis model we have worked with a corpus of approximately 2,000 titles that meet two basic criteria: relevance to the picture book genre -defined by a significant interrelationship between word, image and materiality-; and proven literary quality -of works that have been reviewed as benchmarks of the genre by academic institutions, critical studies or specialised publications. The 105 works cited throughout the article, which illustrate the various taxonomies listed in the analysis sheet, belong to this bibliographic collection (appendix 1).

## CONSTRUCTION OF AN ANALYTICAL MODEL FOR THE STUDY OF PICTURE BOOKS

Our theoretical position is based on a conception of literature as a system of textual networks, which recognises the existence of a constant dialogue between works, operating at discursive, morphological and thematic levels. With the aim of translating this theoretical precept into a practical tool for the study of picture books, an analytical model has been constructed that makes a contribution both at a critical level in the study of the works and at a didactic level for considering the effects of intertextuality in literary education (Vouillamoz-Pajaro, 2022).

The elaboration of an analysis sheet, divided into categories, subcategories and their modalities, provides a method for conducting comparative studies of picture books, which are not exhausted in the framework of our reflections and which open up future and multiple lines of research. We also believe that it is a sufficiently flexible and open model to cover the study of an evolving publishing landscape, as it is capable of integrating new parameters arising from the constant evolution of the genre. Therefore, using three of the major conceptual frameworks offered by the comparative literature -genology, morphology and thematology- it has been possible to order, classify and analyse the “invariants” through which the picture books relate to each other. These constants have been translated into the categories that make up

the analysis sheet. The taxonomies, verified and validated through comparative observation of the works that make up the selected corpus, are listed in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1**

*Description of the analysis sheet*

FRAMEWORKS CONCEPTUAL	CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES	MODALITIES
<b>Genology</b> <i>Genological intertextuality</i>	Discursive hybridisation	Rhetorical loanwords	Appropriation of rhetorical techniques and strategies linked to other literary genres and sub-genres
		Emerging sub-genres	Info-fictional picture books
	Literary re-writings	Simple re-writings	The hypertext respects the hypotext plot, but includes modifications
		Expansions	The hypertext expands the thematic possibilities of the hypotext
		Modifications	The hypertext re-interprets the hypotext
		Collages	The hypertext integrates two or more hypotexts
<b>Morphology</b> <i>Morphological intertextuality</i>	Narrative structure	Sequential structural forms	Linear narrative designs
			Multi-linear narrative designs
			Momentary suspension of narrative linearity
		Forms of structural alteration	Disruptive image treatment
			Dissolving the narrative boundary
			Absence of argument
	Narrative perspective	Targeting	Alternating points of view
			Multiformity
		Relationship between textual and visual perspectives	Convergence
	Chronotopes	Space	Discordance
			Targeting as a theme
		Thematic treatment of zoom	
		Time	Relationship between described space and drawn space
			Intertextual references linked to space
		Relationship between described time and drawn time	
Forms of interpretative complexity	Humour	Intertextual references linked to time	
		Irony	
Rhetorical use of material components	Surprise	Parody	
		Narrative patterns and surprising endings	
	Significance of paratext	Covers: front and back covers	
		Flyleaves	
		Materiality	Format
		Fold	
		Page limits	
		Typographical variations	

FRAMEWORKS CONCEPTUAL	CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES	MODALITIES
		Metamateriality	Physical alteration of covers and/or pages Use of metamaterial resources
<b>Thematology</b>  <i>Thematological intertextuality</i>	Topics	Metaliterature	Themes around the reflection of literature
		Socio-literature	Themes linked to new socio-cultural structures
		Psycho-literature	Themes emerging from a process of psycho-philosophical reflection
		<i>Topoi</i>	Cross-cultural <i>clichés</i> Literary <i>clichés</i>
	Characters	Archetypes	Reframing traditional archetypes Emergence of new archetypes
		Classic characters	Appealing to references Re-functionalisation of references Co-presence of references
		Intertextual references	Literary references
	Artistic references		Intersemiotic relations (interdiscursivity/intermediality)
	Cultural references		Presence of cultural symbols
	References to products linked to the technological era		References to ICTs, digital devices, media, audiovisual fiction

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ANALYSIS MODEL

### *First conceptual framework: Genology*

This is the first, more general area of study, which explores the relationships that the picture book genre has with other literary genres. There are two categories to consider.

- a) **Discursive hybridisation** Processes through which the picture book appropriates compositional strategies characteristic of other discursive forms.
- **Rhetorical loanwords** J. Sáez Castán's *The Three Hedgehogs* is based on a dramatic structure, while K. Crowther performs a theatrical treatment of space in *Alors? The Jolly Postman or Other People's Letters* by A. and J. Ahlberg, and *The Gardener* by S. Stewart and D. Small, introduce the letter writing technique. Comic strips can be found in A. and J. Ahlberg's *Funnybones* or in *John Chatterton detective* by Y. Pommaux.
  - **Emerging sub-genres** Picture books such as K. Read's *One Fox: A Counting Book Thriller*, S. Joire and L. Fanelli's *Petite goutte* or A. Vaugelade's *Comment fabriquer son grand frère. Un livre d'anatomie et de bricolage* represent a type of documentary work that also contains fictional elements, which is why we have called these works info-fictional picture books.



b) **Literary re-writings.** Adaptation of texts of different generic origins to the picture book format, which versions, recreates or transforms works belonging to any literary genre. We follow the classification systematised by [Díaz-Plaja \(2002\)](#).

- **Simple re-writings.** The adaptations made by R. Innocenti in *The Adventures of Pinocchio* or *A Christmas Carol*, although they introduce some modifications, respect the sense and the plot of the original texts.

- **Expansions.** In *Los tres hermanos de oro*, O. de Dios expands the story of *The Hen that laid the Golden Eggs* and narrates the adventures of his three sons. Similarly, G. Bachelet's *Mrs. White Rabbit* does not rewrite L. Carroll's traditional *Alice in Wonderland* tale, but takes one of the most emblematic characters, the white rabbit, to recreate the life of his wife.

- **Modifications.** *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*, by E. Trivizas and H. Oxenbury, versions the hypotext by making a witty inversion of the characters. M. Obiols and M. Calatayud rewrite *Alice in Wonderland* in *Libro de las M'Alicias*, in a process of reinterpretation of the main character that moves away from its original meaning.

- **Collages.** *Beware of The Storybook Wolves* by L. Child and *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* by J. Scieszka and L. Smith are paradigmatic examples of adaptations of various hypotexts, in this case mixed in a humorous register.

## Second conceptual framework: Morphology

It encompasses all those categories that are linked to narrative construction and therefore operate at a formal level of configuration.

a) **Narrative structure.** The organisation of the plot in picture books is based on generic construction schemes that allow us to identify many family similarities ([Zaparaín & González, 2010](#)).

- **Sequential structural forms.** They organise the events according to a sequential design, moving within the traditional framework of narrative logic, although it is true that the coexistence of text, image and material support allows a new look at traditional compositional schemes. Three types in particular stand out:

- Linear narrative designs. Linear and sequential model, which can include variants such as repetitive plots - enumeration (*10 Little Rubber Ducks* by E. Carle), accumulation (*Good Night, Gorilla* by P. Rathman), chaining (*Il topo e la montagna* by A. Gramsci and L. Domènech), question-answer sequences (*The Story of the Little Mole Who Knew It Was None of His Business* by W. Holzwarth and W. Erlbruch), or stories with a circular structure -where the story ends where it began (*The Chicken and the Egg*, and *Eat and Be Eaten* by I. Mari).
- Multi-linear narrative designs. The plot unfolds and, parallel to the main narrative, other stories unfold. Representative are D. McKee's picture books *I Hate my Teddy Bear* and *Charlotte's Piggy Bank*, in which the pictures surrounding the main characters introduce multiple stories. This includes itinerary books, picture books that are usually wordless and large-format, with illustrations that allow the narrative sequences to be followed page after page (such as *El arenque rojo*, by G. Moure and A. Varela).

- Momentary suspension of narrative linearity. The pace of events slows down and the action grinds to a halt. In *Die Geschichte vom Löwen, der nicht schreiben konnte*, M. Baltscheit suspends the story each time he shows the main character's reflections; L. Child will use prolepsis in *I am Too Absolutely Small for School*, which allows him to momentarily interrupt the narrative linearity in order to anticipate future events.

- **Forms of structural alteration.** Transgression of the linearity of the story through the use of strategies such as:

- Disruptive image treatment. In metafictional picture books such as S. Lee's *Lines* or D. Wiesner's *The Three Pigs*, the irruption of visual components entails the rupture of narrative continuity.
- Dissolving the narrative boundary. Alteration of the hierarchical levels of narration, as in E. Urberuaga's *¿Quién anda ahí?* and M. Willems' *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* when the main characters appeal directly to the reader.
- Absence of argument. "List" or "catalogue" picture books (Van-der-Linden, 2015), lacking in narrative development and structurally articulated on a list of proposals often linked by a thematic nexus. Such would be the case of *Salir a caminar* by G. Machado and M. Romero, or *The Big Question* by W. Erlbruch.

b) **Narrative perspective.** Point of view of the story, understood as the place or frame from which the narration takes place. According to Tabernero (2018), one of the fundamental aspects of picture books is the identity of the voice that tells, that looks, so that apparently simple picture books complicate their construction of meaning from the game that is established between the narration and the different points of view elaborated, either through the image or through the word.

- **Targeting.** Angle or point of view from which one speaks: i.e., "from where one narrates". Picture books particularly explore two uses of this formal technique, which can be exemplified in two titles by A. Browne: the alternation of points of view (*Zoo* is the story of a visit to the zoo, alternating the perspective of the visitors with the perspective of the animals living in captivity) and multiformity (*Voices in the Park* offers the coexistence of multiple points of view on the same event).

- **Relationship between textual and visual perspectives.** Sometimes, the textual and visual narration can respond to the same point of view -convergence (M. Sendak's *Where the wild things are*) - or that, on the contrary, the perspective of both stories does not coincide -discordance (C. Van Allsburg narrates *The Polar Express* in the first person, and yet the illustrations are taken from a panoramic perspective).

- **Thematising the point of view.** The perspective of the story ceases to be a formal technique and becomes the theme of the story: in *Two Monsters*, D. McKee makes the angle of vision the thematic axis of the work. It is also worth highlighting those picture books that coincide in making zoom their argument (Zaparaín & González, 2010), such as the classics by I. Banyai *Zoom* and *Re-zoom*.

c) **Chronotopes.** Time and space coordinates that contextualise the development of the narrative. The still images of picture books are inadequate to express space and time: this is one of the great challenges facing illustrators (Van-der-Linden, 2015). The contrastive study of chronotopes should pay special attention to the dialogue established between texts and images, because the treatment

that both languages make of spatio-temporal relations is particularly relevant (the account of public space and intimate space in *Afuera y adentro* by M. Naranjo, the drawn course of time in *Goodnight Moon* by M. Wise Brown). Similarly, attention should be paid to the intertextual references associated with certain places or periods (*The Magician of Auschwitz* by K. Kacer and G. Newland takes us to the Germany of the Holocaust, *The Composition* by A. Skármeta and A. Ruano to Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile).

- d) **Forms of interpretative complexity.** One of the particularities of picture books as a product of postmodernity is the overcoming of the univocal meaning of the text, for which rhetorical strategies are used that generate imprecise contents and introduce different levels of significance through effects such as comicality or bewilderment.

- **Humour.** We highlight two high forms of humour commonly used in picture books and which entail an interpretative complexity: irony (*I Want my Hat Back* by J. Klassen, *Finn Herman* by M. Letén and H. Bartholin), generated by the discordance between what we read literally and what it really means (Belloirín-Briceño, 2015); and parody (*Le petit livre rouge* by P. Brasseur, *Look Hamlet* by B. Lindgren and A. Höglund), which on many occasions implies the presence of a hypertext that adapts a hypotext in a burlesque tone.

- **Surprise.** It increases interpretative complexity by proposing an interplay between what is made explicit and what is kept hidden in order to surprise. *Zeralda's Ogre* by T. Ungerer and *The Little Barbarian* by R. Moriconi surprise the reader by closing the narrative with an ending that invites re-reading.

- e) **Rhetorical use of material components.** Picture books should be conceived as a global system in which all its components participate, to varying degrees, in the production of meaning: because everything has meaning in picture books (Van-der-Linden, 2015). Texts and images dialogue with the materiality of the book, which can exert great influence on the work.

- **Significance of paratext.** Paratextual elements can play an important role in constructing the overall meaning of a story (Colomer et al., 2018). Particularly significant are the front and back covers -transitional spaces between the real world and the fiction world-, and the flyleaves -which can become dependent narratological spaces, providing anticipatory elements, creating atmospheres or advancing the construction of hypotheses (Hanán-Díaz, 2020). *Das Buch im Buch im Buch* by J. Muller shows a cover that seems to be broken and that introduces the reader to the metafictional dimension of picture books; the flyleaves of *Don't Cross the Line* by I. Minhós Martins and B. P. Carvalho offer the whole gallery of characters whose journey we will follow throughout the pages of the book.

- **Materiality.** The vertical format of G. Zullo and Albertine's *Sky High*, the functionality of the fold in S. Lee's *The Border Trilogy*, the transgression of the physical space of the page in M. Felix's *The Further Adventures of a Little Mouse Trapped in a Book* or the typographic variations of A. Browne's *Voices in the Park*, are examples of how material elements become keys to meaning in the reading process.

- **Metamateriality.** The material components can also be used to propose a reflection on the construction process of picture books. The physical alteration of P. Newell's *The Slant Book*, or the introduction of perforations in E. Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and Y. Torseter's *The Hole*, respond to this desire.

### *Third conceptual framework: Thematology*

It includes those categories that refer to aspects related to the treatment of themes and characters. This is one of the most prolific areas for comparative analysis, as it provides easily identifiable intertextual markers that allow explicit connections to be made between works.

- a) **Topics.** Picture books incorporate a wide range of thematic content, and does so from a broad narrative space formed by text, image and the materiality of the book as an object. Recurring themes become intertextual connectors that can be grouped into four broad taxonomies.

- **Metaliterature.** Works such as *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* by W. Joyce and J. Bluhm, or *The Last Resort* by R. Innocenti and J. P. Lewis, make literature the subject and invite us to reflect on its artistic nature or on the creative process.

- **Socio-literature.** Issues that appear to be linked to the development of modern societies. Picture books take in everything that happens in the world and transfer it to children's literature: hence the appearance of books about child poverty (*Cena De Rua* by A. Lago); emigration (*The Arrival* by S. Tan); war conflicts (*The Day War Came* by N. Davies and R. Cobb); new family structures (*And Tango makes three* by J. Richardson, P. Parnell and H. Cole); the social situation of women (*Rula busca su lugar* by M. Pavón); the climatic emergency (*Sunakay* by M. Martí and X. Salomó); loneliness and the search for the other (*Herman and Rosie* by G. Gordon), among many others.

- **Psycho-literature.** Transgressing an idealised view of childhood, picture books open the door to thematic motifs related to the psychological conflicts that children face at successive ages (Colomer et al., 2018). Works such as *Where the wild things are* by M. Sendak (children's behaviour); *Juul* by G. de Maeyer and K. Vanmechelen (psychological bullying); *El niño perfecto* by A. González and B. Cormand (sexual identity); *Can I built another me?* by S. Yoshitake (self-recognition); *Duck, Death and the Tulip* by W. Erlbruch (philosophical reflection on death) or *Vacío* by A. Llenas (resilience), among many others, show how literature stops sublimating childhood and offers a much more real picture of the introspective universe of children.

- **Topoi.** Thematic motifs that are part of the universal imagination. Among them we find intercultural clichés whose symbolic meaning subsists throughout time and space -the personification of natural elements in *El Sol, la Luna y el Agua* by L. Herrera and A. Vargas, the cunning of tiny characters such as *Issun Bôshi* by Icinori-, and literary clichés perpetuated throughout the tradition -*locus amoenus* in *The Trip to Panama* by Janosch, *carpe diem* in *L'Éphémère* by S. Sénégas.

- b) **Characters.** In the study of who performs the actions that take place in the narrative, an intertextual look allows us to establish two typologies that are very specific to picture books.

- **Archetypes.** It is not only possible to speak of the reformulation of traditional archetypes -parodying the traditional figure of the wolf in *Look out! It's the Wolf!* by E. Jadoul or *The Wolf Will Not Come* by M. Ouyessad and R. Badel-, but also of the appearance of new stereotypes -colours (*Little Blue and Little Yellow* by L. Lionni), geometric figures (*Four Little Corners* by J. Ruillier) or numbers (*Little 1* by A. Rand and P. Rand), become main characters.

- **Classic characters.** Following the taxonomy proposed by Mendoza-Fillola (2002), it is possible to speak of three processes: appeal to references -*Into the Forest* by A. Browne or *Sidewalk Flowers* by J. A. Lawson evoke the figure of Little Red Riding Hood-, refunctionalisation of references -S. Servant and L. Le Saux give new significance to Goldilocks in *Boucle d'ours*, just as

E. Hughes reinvents Mowgli in *Wild-*, and co-presence of references -B. Martín Vidal's *Enigmas* or G. Bachelet's *Stories Behind the Scenes* include, from different registers, a wide range of characters that form part of the tradition.

- c) **Intertextual references.** Specific references to other artistic or cultural objects that, explicitly or implicitly, appear in a work.

- **Literary references.** References to literary works can occur through different strategies, such as the implicit reference -*The Greedy Goat* by P. Horacek pays homage to *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by E. Carle, just as *Fab, el monstruo amarillo* by C. Solé Vendrell pays homage to the work of D. McKeey-; the reference allusion -in an example of intratextuality, P. Rathman includes in *10 Minutes till Bedtime* his other picture book *Good Night, Gorilla*; M. T. Andruetto does the same when he includes in *Clara y el hombre de la ventana* his other work *La Durmiente-*, or the inclusion of identifying elements -A. Browne's *The Tunnel* includes in its illustrations constant allusions to classic tales, D. McKee draws a figure of Elmer on the bookshelf of the main character of his other book *Not now, Bernard*.

- **Artistic references.** References to aesthetic productions of a non-literary nature: pictorial (*Mvsevm* by J. Sáez Castán and M. Marsol), sculptural (*In the Attic* by H. Oram and S. Kitamura), musical (*El Bolero de Ravel* by J. A. Abad and F. Delicado), cinematographic (*Le Jacquot de Monsieur Hulot* by D. Merveille).

- **Cultural references.** *Madlenka* by P. Sís or *Anno's Journey* by M. Anno are wonderful glossaries of intercultural elements.

- **References to products linked to the technological era.** In *It's a Book*, L. Smith deals with the confrontation between print and digital culture; this is also the theme of L. Pauli and M. Zedelius's *Oje, ein Buch!*

## CONCLUSIONS

The model of analysis we are proposing is a very operative tool for the critical exploration of the works, through a comparative study of the functioning of discursive, constructive and thematic features from their presence in different texts. But it also allows us to explore the benefits of intertextuality in literary education by enabling a "network reading" with the aim of comparing, identifying and reflecting on the traces that some texts leave in others (Tauveron as cited in [Fittipaldi, 2013](#)). We thus offer a highly operative instrument for tracing the reading itineraries proposed by [Organic Act 3/2020, of 29<sup>th</sup> December, which modifies Organic Act 2/2006, of 3<sup>rd</sup> May, on Education \(LOMLOE\)](#) in literary training, now organised on the basis of intertextual associations which, responding to different -generic, morphological and thematic- criteria, will enable students to establish links between works and begin to construct a literary map.

All of this represents a great advance in the field of literary education, given that an education based on intertextuality improves receptive skills, enriches the reading experience and contributes to literary learning. Intertextual marks are like a set of clues that children learn to follow, helping to deepen the process of constructing meaning and enhancing a set of cognitive skills such as exploration and recognition, comparative analysis, decoding implicit clues to meaning, and linking literature to other forms of artistic and cultural expression ([Colomer et al., 2018](#)).

Beyond our reflections, we trust that the exploratory method we offer will bear fruit in future lines of research, and that its application as a model for textual analysis and the design of reading programmes will shed new light on critical and didactic studies in the field of children's and young adult literature.

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## APPENDIX 1. ANALYSED PICTURE BOOKS

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