Children are the future architects, clients and users of our buildings. The kinds of architectural worlds they are exposed to in picturebooks during their formative years may be assumed to influence how they regard such architecture as adults.

Contemporary urban environments the world over represent the various stages of modernism in architecture. This book reads that history through picturebooks and considers the kinds of national identities and histories they construct.

Twelve specialist essays from international scholars address questions such as: Is modern architecture used to construct specific narratives of childhood? Is it taken to support ‘negative’ narratives of alienation on the one hand and ‘positive’ narratives of happiness on the other? Do images of modern architecture support ideas of ‘community’? Reinforce ‘family values’? If so, what kinds of architecture, community and family? How is modern architecture placed vis-à-vis the promotion of diversity (ethnic, religious, gender etc.)? How might the use of architecture in comic strips or the presence of specific kinds of building in fiction aimed at younger adults be related to the groundwork laid in picturebooks for younger readers?

This book reveals what stories are told about modern architecture and shows how those stories affect future attitudes towards and expectations of the built environment.

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In memory of
Charles Rattray
Architect and Teacher
1956–2022
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INTRODUCTION

Torsten Schmiedeknecht, Jill Rudd and Emma Hayward

‘Picturebooks’, as Perry Nodelman puts it, ‘are a significant means by which we integrate young children into the ideology of our culture’ (Nodelman, 2004, p.157). In part, this is due to the fact that ‘the intended audience of picturebooks is by definition inexperienced—in need of learning how to think about their world, how to see and understand themselves and others’ (Nodelman, 2004, p.157). Part of the world those young children necessarily think about is the built environment, so what they encounter through stories and information books and also what they don’t will inevitably shape their attitudes towards different kinds of architecture and design. This book reflects upon that and the idea for it emerged some years ago: in 2014 Julia Chance, a painter originally trained as an architect, who had up to this point also been running architecture workshops in schools, decided to work on an architecture themed picturebook for children. For some time, Chance had been discussing with Torsten Schmiedeknecht of Liverpool University’s Architecture department, why it is that modern architecture in the UK is still not very well received by the general public, with both agreeing that, as Alan Powers put it, ‘the lack of widespread popular acceptance of Modernism in Britain since its inception cannot simply be ignored or dismissed as the stupidity of the unenlightened’ (Powers, 2007, p.1).

Their discussion led to debate over how children, via the means of architectural images, are introduced to various societal norms, conventions, and ideologies, all of which subsequently resulted in the paper ‘Absent Architectures: post-war housing in British children’s picturebooks (1960–present)’ (Hayward and Schmiedeknecht, 2019) and the exhibition ‘Building Children’s Worlds’ at RIBA North in Liverpool, curated by Schmiedeknecht. In turn, the paper and the RIBA exhibition prompted further research, leading us to wonder how architecture is represented in picturebooks in different countries across the globe. The following collection of 12 essays by authors originating from Sweden, Germany, USA, Colombia, Australia, France, Italy, Singapore, China and the UK, covering work from North and South America, Europe, Asia and Australia, addresses questions such as: Is modern architecture used to construct specific narratives of childhood? Is it taken to support ‘negative’ narratives of alienation on the one hand and ‘positive’ narratives of happiness
on the other? Do images of modern architecture support ideas of ‘community’? Do they reinforce ‘family values’? If so, what kinds of architecture, community and family? How is modern architecture placed vis-à-vis the promotion of ethnic, sexual, gender or other diversity? How is architecture used in related forms, such as the comic strip or fiction aimed at younger adults?

The result is a volume which reveals what stories are told about modern architecture and how those stories affect future attitudes towards and expectations of the built environment, particularly in relation to Modernity, Domestic Space and Urban Space, which are the three constituent parts of this book. Part I, Modernity, sets the context, looking at the broader scope of how modern architecture and ideas of modernity have been represented in picturebooks. The sections on Domestic Space and Urban Space then take a more focussed look at the home and the city, respectively. Throughout, we are reminded that children are the future architects, clients and users of our buildings. The kinds of architectural worlds they are exposed to in picturebooks during their formative years may be assumed to influence how they regard such architecture as adults. Indeed, as Kimberly Reynolds argues, this assumption gave rise to books such as Badmin’s *Village and Town* in 1942 (Reynolds, *Left Out: The forgotten tradition of radical publishing for children in Britain 1910–1949*, Oxford, 2016). Our book builds on Reynolds’s work, expanding beyond Britain to reflect upon the representation of modern architecture in children’s books internationally and consider how the portrayal of (modern) architecture varies between different countries and continents. Contemporary urban environments the world over represent the various stages of modernism in architecture. Very much conceived as a multidisciplinary effort from the beginning, this book reads that history through picturebooks and considers the kinds of national identities and histories they construct. Housing may be assumed to address those concerns directly, as Reynolds has already demonstrated (see Reynolds *Left Out*, Chapter 2); her arguments are expanded upon and added to here, but they are also addressed indirectly through illustrations to stories not overtly concerned with housing at all, such as pictures in which other forms of architecture serve as the backdrop to adventures or books that offer information about the world beyond the home.

In this, our collection joins other work already done in the field of picturebook research and endorses the description of how picturebooks work offered by Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott, who point out that although ‘pictures in picturebooks are complex iconic signs, and words are complex conventional signs; however, the basic relationship between the two levels is the same. The function of pictures, iconic signs, is to describe or represent’. They go on to elaborate on the difference between the typically linear nature of the conventional sign (word) which is thus linked to narrative and that of the iconic sign which, in their view, is not to be linear and so does not give ‘direct instruction about how to read them’. Importantly, the ‘tension between the two functions creates unlimited possibilities for interaction between word and image’ (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006, p.1). Other work, too, such as that by Marnie Campagnaro (2019), Teresa Colomer, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Cecilia Silva-Díaz (eds, 2010) and John Stephens (ed, 2017) demonstrate that picturebooks are highly influential in moulding the opinions, social beliefs and expectations of children, showing this to be internationally the case, regardless of what those beliefs and expectations might be. In short, the humble picturebook is now recognised as not only one of the most appealing but also one of the most important kinds of book we encounter during the course of our lives.
Introduction

Throughout this volume, we have used the term ‘picturebook’ rather than the two-word phrase ‘picture book’. Up until fairly recently, the two were interchangeable, but increased attention has created nuanced appreciation of the different ways words and images act and interact within this form of literature. Uri Shulevitz has been particularly forthright on the difference between a work in which the pictures are entirely and solely at the service of the words – a form he prefers to call ‘illustrated texts’ – and those in which the pictures carry a narrative which may or (as many of the essays in this collection demonstrate) may not be the same as the one conveyed by the words (Shulevitz, 1996). Kimberley Reynolds, in her highly informative and very useful Children’s Literature: A Very Short Introduction, clarifies the distinction by detecting an emerging trend in the use of the two available terms, thus in picturebooks, the written text and the images repeat information. This is so regardless of whether the image is used to show what the word means (such as in early learner readers where the word ‘apple’ is accompanied by the picture of the fruit, apple) or the words explain what the picture is showing (a picture of a house is accompanied by the words ‘this is a house’ or perhaps ‘this is Alex’s house’). In contrast, in picturebooks the words and the images are ‘interdependent’, that is, they are linked, and indeed frequently focus on the same topic, incident or object, but each offers something the other does not (see Reynolds, 2011, p.57). That linked yet simultaneously independent relation offers much room for critical analysis and debate, as the essays in this volume amply demonstrate.

It is also worth noting that since its inception with Comenius’s Orbis Sensualum Pictus (published in 1658 and often cited as the first book primarily aimed at children), the picturebook format has been used as much for conveying factual information, as for storybooks. Academic discussion, however, has tended to keep these two categories apart, focusing on either fact or, more often, fiction; a tendency Nina Goga, Sarah Hoem Iversen and Anne-Stefi Teigland comment upon, attributing the relative paucity of studies of non-fiction picturebooks to ‘the unwillingness to include the many verbal and visual strategies of nonfiction within the concept of children’s literature’ (Goga, Iversen and Teigland, 2021, p.1). The aim of Goma, Iversen and Teigland is to provide theoretical frameworks for discussion of non-fiction picturebooks; a by-product is to increase awareness of the variety of non-fiction picturebooks that exist. While our aim is different, in that we focus specifically on the presence of modern architecture in picturebooks (mainly those aimed at children under 12 years of age, but including also some consideration of comic strips and graphic books), this volume, too, draws attention to the great variety of form, content and purpose to be found in between their pages.

Part One – Modernity

In Chapter 1, Elina Druker examines how modernist ideas were communicated in children’s literature in Sweden through the use of images of, for example, the 1930 Luma Factory. Conjuring up attributes such as hygiene and speed, the Factory stood a representative of technical innovation on the one hand, and of ideas of the welfare state and children as its future citizens – and consumers – on the other. Employing Mitchell’s concept of ‘imagetext’ in her analysis of the illustrations of the Luma Factory in the popular Per and Lisa
picturebooks, Druker specifically asks ‘how these books exhibit an interdisciplinary conver- 
gence between children’s literature, commercialism, and high-modernist architecture’.

Following on, Torsten Schmiedeknecht and Jill Rudd in Chapter 2 examine Ladybird 
books from the late 1950s, the 1960s and the early 1970s, concluding that there are plenty 
of illustrations of modern architecture to be found, almost all of which are associated with 
positive aspects of progress and the modern world. The ‘Ladybird Book of Achievements’ 
Series 601, illustrated by John Berry and Robert Ayton, amongst others, and the ‘People 
at Work’ Series 606B, with illustrations by Robert Ayton, are cases in point. The chapter 
sets out the ‘typology’ of Ladybird books in the context of post-war children’s literature, 
followed by an analysis of what kind of modern architecture was represented in the books 
and how this architecture was used to support a particular narrative of modernity.

In Chapter 3, Honglan Huang posits that ‘Like architectural books, picturebooks for 
children pay particular attention to generating meaning through non-verbal means’. Ex-
amining three books – El Lissitzky’s *About Two Squares* (1922), David Macaulay’s *Unbuilding* 
(1980) and Fanny Millard’s *Upside Down* (2019) – and drawing on similarities between ar-
chitectural books and picturebooks for children in ‘generating meaning through non-verbal 
means’, she demonstrates how picturebooks can not only contain and represent ideas on 
ar
ducture, but become architecture themselves by turning ‘reading into an exercise of 
building, whether metaphorically or literally’.

In the final chapter in this section (Chapter 4) on modernity, Carolina Rodríguez, 
Roberto Londoño and Antonio Manrique investigate how ‘imaginaries of the modern 
city and its ideal architecture’ are represented in Colombian picturebooks from the middle 
of the 20th century to the present day, reviewing ‘the events, narratives, and adaptations 
that affected their emergence, development, demise, and legacy’. The authors base their 
findings on a study of seven illustrations, which were also subjected to a survey by a group 
of 5–13-year-old children as to their perceived messages and meaning, and show that fiction 
and reality are mingled via the use of imaginaries, thus extending the influence of pic-
tures in these books beyond simple depiction into affecting ‘the construction of utopias and 
dystopias regarding our connection with the built environment’.

**Part Two – Domestic space**

Despite domestic buildings in Australian picturebooks being ‘seldom represented as the 
central theme of a book’. John Stephens in Chapter 5 points out their importance in 
narratives of Australian childhoods’. And while ‘exteriors appear mainly as settings or as 
background fragments’, he posits that ‘elements of design: a collection of artefacts, espe-
ially items of furniture’ often carry more significance, particularly with regards to their 
metonymic function, than we might expect. Stephens’s analysis of Australian picturebooks 
therefore ‘needs to include more than the fabric of buildings but also embrace design and 
contents’ before taking into account broader settings such as suburban landscapes and houses, 
which are ‘underpinned’ by ‘notions of well-being in Australian communities’.

In Chapter 6, Christophe Meunier traces the evolution of the representation of the house 
in children’s picturebooks published in France since the 1930s. Initially, the home was 
depicted in a way that emphasised its elementary functions, communicating narratives of 
safety and security. However, the 1950s saw an increased interest in the psychology of the 
home, particularly the role it plays in the complex processes of identification. Drawing
on ideas developed by a range of French philosophers and thinkers, including Gaston Bachelard, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Pierre Bourdieu, Meunier examines the ways in which Modernist architecture is evoked and deployed by authors and illustrators to represent the psychology of its users. Like Drucker, Meunier also shows how Modernist domestic architecture assumes a preparatory function in children's picturebooks, becoming not just a machine for living in, but also 'a machine for dwelling the world'.

Marnie Campagnaro turns her attention towards Italian interior design after the Second World War, in Chapter 7. Following the Second World War, the city was no longer considered safe for children: 'From being assiduous and wandering flaneurs of open spaces outdoors, children were forced to spend much more time at home and become more permanent inhabitants of domestic spaces'. As a result, the structure of the home changed to accommodate the presence of children, and Italian interior designers created children’s furniture that could meet their needs for play and creativity within the restricted space of the home. Examining two children’s picturebooks by the pioneering Italian artist, designer and writer Bruno Munari, Campagnaro explores the ways in which furniture, indoor objects and Modern and historic architecture are used to convey and challenge social and cultural values of the period.

In Chapter 8, Sabine Tan, Xinchao Zhai, Lyndon Way and Kay L. O’Halloran examine representations of architecture from three different cultural regions and environments, namely Australia (low to medium density dwellings), Singapore (high-density dwellings) and China (traditional low rise and high-density buildings), looking at 'how they function to socialise children in different social and cultural contexts in a modern, globalised world'. Arguing that architectural representations are also indicators of how different societies might reflect on their own development regarding 'the pressures of modernity', the authors used purpose-built software for multimodal image analysis investigating ‘the role of representations of architecture and how the social practices depicted in various spaces defined through modern architectural design function to instil core values in relation to the individual, family, community and society’.

Focusing on a selection of British and American picturebooks published since 2000, Emma Hayward concludes this section of the book in Chapter 9 by responding to a growing critical discourse on diversity in children’s picturebooks. In particular, she considers to what extent depictions of modern domestic architecture – including American suburbia and post-war, high-rise British housing estates – can be seen to authenticate narratives which engage with issues of diversity, such as sexual diversity and economic diversity, and to what extent they can be seen to threaten the authenticity of these narratives. Hayward argues that verbal-visual representations which draw attention to the protean nature of architecture – its fluidity and adaptability – give material form to a range of family types, and in so doing, go some way to validating their identity and experiences.

**Part Three – Urban space**

In the first chapter on Urban Space (Chapter 10), Lucy Glasheen shifts the focus away from picturebooks to consider the comic strip form. Looking at three ‘Casey Court’ cartoons published between 1936 and 1939 which focused on the *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition, Glasheen demonstrates how the ‘Exibishun’ presented in ‘Casey Court’ mimics and satirises key aspects, such as innovation and spectacle, allowing the cartoon to represent
and challenge ‘the aspirational community’ that the Ideal Home exhibition constructed. Glasheen further examines the ways in which the cartoons consider children as an audience for modern architecture as well as positioning them as subjects of narratives about modern architecture.

Following on from Glasheen, in Chapter 11 Madison McLeod directs her attention to the kinds of literature children go on to read beyond their early years – specifically, novels. Drawing on the digital humanities, McLeod adopts a unique approach to analysing the significance of ‘geographic specificity’ in children’s fantasy books set in London. Her combination of Geographic Information Systems, binary coding, literary mapping software, close reading and children’s literature scholarship sheds new light on London’s architectural landmarks and their role in children’s fantasy fiction published between 1990 and 2021. McLeod notes that modern buildings are largely neglected in youth fantasy literature and asks to what extent children’s picturebooks set in London have contributed to this absence. Discussing the picturebook form, Nikolajeva and Scott suggest that the interplay between iconic signs (pictures) and conventional signs (words) ‘creates unlimited possibilities for interaction between word and image’. Not only is this true of children’s picturebooks but true also of academic literary scholarship, which can, as McLeod’s maps show, be enriched by visual interpretation of textual narratives.

The final chapter (Chapter 12) returns to the picturebook form with Jörg Meibauer introducing the work of Swiss illustrator Jörg Müller and how he used images of architecture and cityscapes to support narratives of ‘ideological criticism’ directed towards the flaws of modernity, in particular modern urban environments. Drawing on samples from across Müller’s oeuvre, Meibauer highlights the illustrator’s technique of creating generic modern cityscapes based on the photographic documentation of existing cities.

**Concluding thoughts**

Taken individually, each essay in this book offers a new way into the varied world of children’s picturebooks and at the same time demonstrates how attitudes towards and conversations around modern architecture are played out within their pages. One result of gathering together such an international collection is that it demonstrates the extent to which the forms and fate of modern architecture differs from country to country. In each case, modernism’s optimistic desire for a fresh start and cleaner, less cluttered lines and lives has made its mark, but while the optimism may be seen to continue, for instance in Singapore and Columbia, disappointment or disillusion may be seen in the books discussed from Britain and Switzerland. That said, picturebooks published in Britain in more recent years can be seen to recuperate the optimism associated with post-war modernism.

Taken as a whole, though, certain themes emerge – such as class, civicism, family values, the relationship between ‘reality’ and representation and interior design – as children are shown to be astute observers of their environment, and while they may be as susceptible as adults to the influences of illustrations encountered in early childhood, they are also more enquiring and open to alternative responses than we perhaps give them credit for. The optimism and positivity, so easily associated with early years of both Modern architecture and childhood, are revealed to sit alongside associations with middle-class and upper-class living, which is beyond the personal experience of many of the target readership of children up to age nine. That fact is variously suppressed or addressed by the works considered here. At the
same time, by drawing in their audience, through both words and images, and giving them space to reflect and respond, the books discussed in this volume all ensure that their readers engage with (modern) architecture, one way or another, whether as child or adult.

This collection also serves to remind us of the variety of ways in which we all encounter representations of architecture: in early learner readers, in stories, in activity books and in cartoons. Both fact and fiction are discussed here, allowing readers to consider the two modes side by side in a way that seems to be found only rarely in scholarly work on children’s picturebooks to date. Above all, we hope that the separate and cumulative effect of the chapters offered here will go some way to demonstrate how rich the field of architecture and children’s literature is and how diverse and interesting its products may be.

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References


PART ONE
Modernity
During the 1930s and 1940s, hundreds of grocery stores in functionalist style were built in Sweden by the Cooperative Union retail group. They sold everything from tableware and shoes to food items and canned goods. One of the few toys sold in Cooperative stores during the 1930s was a set of building blocks called *Bygg upp* [Build up]. The set could be constructed in two ways: it could either form a model of a Cooperative grocery store or it could be shaped as a factory. When using the blocks to build a factory, the green, black and white blocks formed a strikingly modernist building with sleek horizontal lines. In fact, it formed a miniature of an existing modernist building, the Luma Light Bulb Factory in Stockholm, built in 1930 and considered to be Sweden’s first functionalist industrial facility.

A set of building blocks that form two highly emblematic modernist buildings can be seen as an expression of a period where new industries were rapidly developing at the same time as ideas of functionalist architecture emerged throughout Scandinavia. But while manufacturing building blocks that form a play grocery store can hardly be considered an unusual subject for a toy, the choice of a functionalist industrial facility raises some questions. The building blocks are connected to progressive educational ideas of the time, where simple, wooden toys with elemental shapes and colours were seen as pedagogically and aesthetically beneficial; but the toy also expresses notions of childhood and modern design and architecture.

The Luma Factory was a flagship in the Cooperative Union’s operations and quickly became a well-known symbol for modernist ideas about architecture, industrial innovation and engineering. On the roof of the facility, a distinctive, rectangular glass tower was constructed, which was used for testing light bulbs. The tower created a striking, luminous cube on the top of the building. Images of the building with the light tower were reproduced in a range of different contexts and media, in advertising, window displays and films as well as in novels, picturebooks and toys for children. How should we, then, understand the images and narratives constructed in this context? And what ideas are communicated through modern architecture and children who interact with modern design in children’s literature?
Using literary and visual depictions of the Luma Factory and other industrial buildings from the 1930s and 1940s, this chapter will examine how ideas about modernist architecture and technology were explored in books for children during the period. Applying concepts from childhood studies and consumer research as well as theories about modernism and modernity in children’s literature, I will discuss how selected picturebooks and toys and their advertisements communicate particular narratives about children as future citizens and consumers. Using W. J. T. Mitchell’s concept ‘imagetext’, which proposes a level of meaning which is not medium specific and in which word and image complement, reinforce, and sometimes contradict each other in complex ways (Mitchell, 1986), I will specifically study the use of the Luma Factory and other industrial buildings in a series of picturebooks about Per and Lisa, published in Sweden from the early 1930s to the 1950s, and will discuss how these books exhibit an interdisciplinary convergence between children’s literature, commercialism and high-modernist architecture.

As well as prevailing ideas about children and childhood, which are fundamental for the development of children’s literature during the 1930s and 1940s, the aim of this chapter is to study representations of children in multiple narratives of modernity.
'Folkhemmet’—the idea of the Swedish people’s home—was introduced in 1928. Marked by democracy and equality, the concept proposed that the country should strive to become a ‘good home’ for its citizens and revealed its greatest idealism in its view of children. Children’s development, education and welfare was considered particularly important for building the new society and large investments were made towards welfare reforms, especially after World War II (Sandin, 2012, p. 68). The state also promoted consumerist habits amongst children, for example, through a general child-allowance which was launched in 1948 and aimed at all children under 16 years of age (Sandin, 2012, p. 65).

The picturebooks about the two children Per and Lisa were published by The Swedish Cooperative Union, one of the leading Swedish retailers. For several decades, the Cooperative Union was also a powerful and influential actor in the Swedish political landscape. It had a vast influence on marketing, architecture, design and consumer policies, and became an important participant in the development of the Swedish welfare state and the people’s home idea (Mattsson, 2012, p. 65). From the early 1930s to the mid-1950s, the company published a series of branded picturebooks which were free of charge, printed in very large editions—up to 250,000 copies—and written and illustrated by established authors and illustrators. These publications consisted of children’s books with embedded marketing, incorporating products by different manufacturers in the narratives. Product placement was implemented by including different commodities in the illustrations and by explicitly mentioning the trademarks in the text. The Cooperative Union was not the only retailer who frequently used this marketing method; branded picturebooks or pamphlets with stories can be found in different countries during the first half of the 20th century, their publishers ranging from candy manufacturers to producers of hygiene products, shoes, toys, even types of insurance (Hallberg, 1996, pp. 48–51, Druker, 2014, pp. 167–180).

The introduction of the branded books coincides with new marketing strategies and platforms aimed at children. Previous researchers like Viviane Zelizer (1985) and Daniel Thomas Cook (2000, 2004) have shown that a general commercialisation of children’s daily life took place during the first four decades of the 20th century. The construct of the child as a ‘little consumer’ replaced previous ideas which saw children as ‘unfinished’ persons in need of socialisation. This meant that children were now considered a key market for advertisers (Cook, 2000, p. 501). In Sweden, by the 1930s, advertisements frequently included representations of children as competent consumers who make decisions about their purchases and act in the commodity society (Berggren Torell & Brembeck, 2001, pp. 76–77). These kinds of images multiplied during the 1940s and 1950s.

Modern architecture and space travel

The set of building blocks from the Cooperative Union can primarily be seen as a way to market the Cooperative brand. But it can also be seen as an effort to influence the child’s taste and sense for architecture, design and form. As Kimberley Reynolds shows, children’s literature with radical design aesthetics or images of modernist architecture was used to introduce ‘new aesthetic codes, sensibilities, and vocabularies’ during the 1930s and 1940s, to develop new patterns and new kinds of behaviour and thus ‘to build with the future in mind’ (Reynolds, 2016, p. 181).

The Luma Factory, which was designed by Artur von Schmalensee and Eskil Sundahl, the latter founder and manager of the Cooperative Union’s in-house architecture office, had