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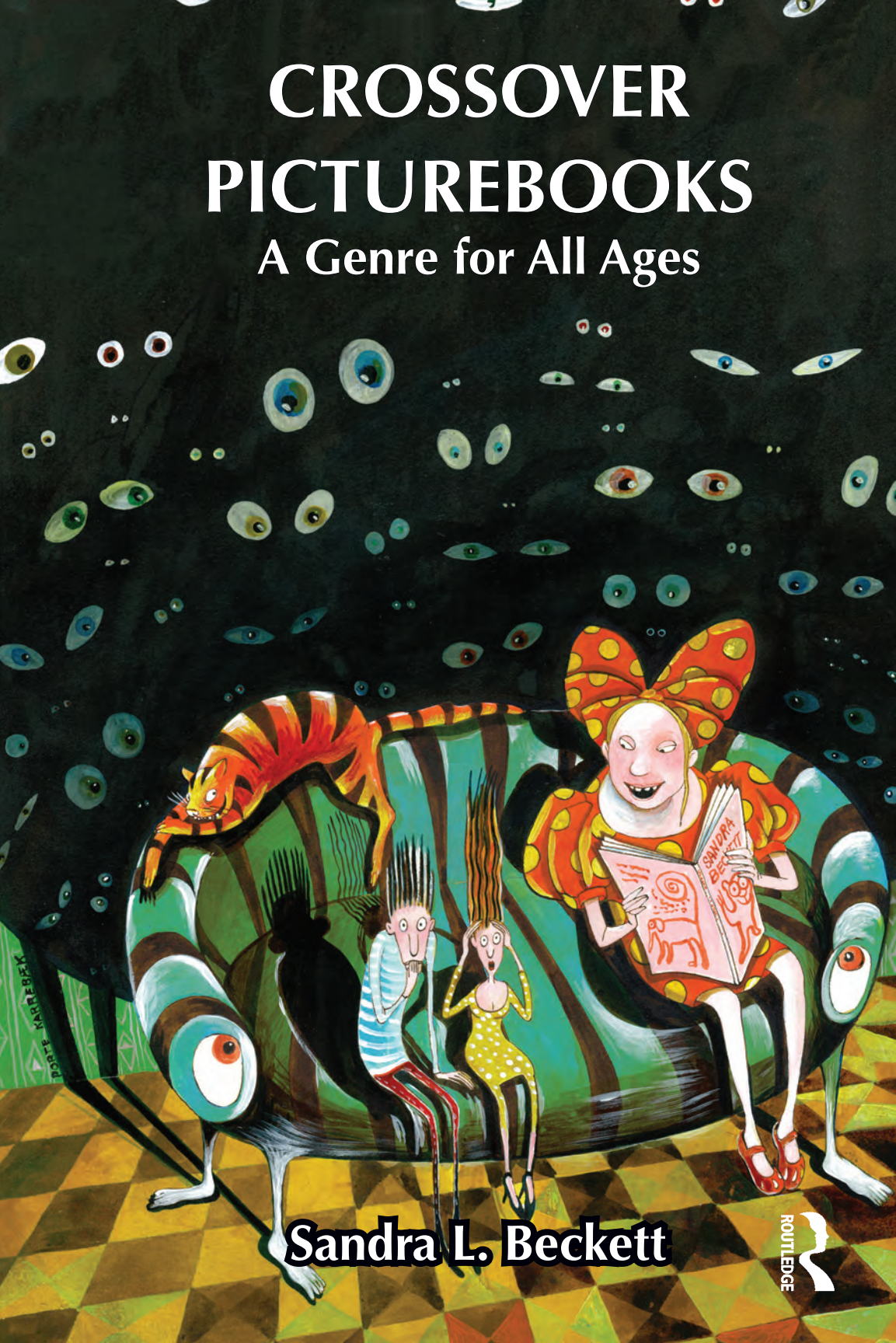
A Genre for All Ages



Sandra L. Beckett

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Crossover Picturebooks
A Genre for All Ages
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CROSSOVER PICTUREBOOKS

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SANDRA L. BECKETT

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To Paul, Jordan, Jeremy, Jason, and Danielle
in loving appreciation of their support and encouragement

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Series Editor's Foreword

Dedicated to furthering original research in children's literature and culture, the Children's Literature and Culture series includes monographs on individual authors and illustrators, historical examinations of different periods, literary analyses of genres, and comparative studies on literature and the mass media. The series is international in scope and is intended to encourage innovative research in children's literature with a focus on interdisciplinary methodology.

Children's literature and culture are understood in the broadest sense of the term children to encompass the period of childhood up through adolescence. Owing to the fact that the notion of childhood has changed so much since the origination of children's literature, this Routledge series is particularly concerned with transformations in children's culture and how they have affected the representation and socialization of children. While the emphasis of the series is on children's literature, all types of studies that deal with children's radio, film, television, and art are included in an endeavor to grasp the aesthetics and values of children's culture. Not only have there been momentous changes in children's culture in the last fifty years, but there have been radical shifts in the scholarship that deals with these changes. In this regard, the goal of the Children's Literature and Culture series is to enhance research in this field and, at the same time, point to new directions that bring together the best scholarly work throughout the world.

Jack Zipes

Acknowledgments

Many people and organizations have contributed in various ways to this study. Unfortunately, it is impossible to name them all. I am particularly indebted to the many authors and illustrators around the globe who have graciously discussed their work with me and generously granted permission for it to be reproduced in this book. Their names will become evident in the pages of *Crossover Picturebooks*. I would like to extend my collective thanks to the many friends and colleagues who have contributed in some way to this book, in particular Diane Bielicki, Nina Christensen, Corrado Federici, Yukiko Fukumoto, Vanessa Joosen, Lena Kåreland, Maria Nikolajeva, Junko Nishimura, Lissa Paul, Jean Perrot, Kimberley Reynolds, Rolf Romören, Zohar Shavit, Masaki Tomoko, Thomas van der Walt, Anne de Vries, and Jack Zipes. My deep gratitude goes to the staff at the International Youth Library in Munich and the International Institute for Children's Literature, Osaka, notably Jochen Weber and Yasuko Doi. I wish to thank Four Courts Press and Routledge for permission to reprint extracts of essays published in *Studies in Children's Literature 1500–2000* and *New Directions in Picturebook Research*, respectively. I should further like to acknowledge the generous financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Brock University Chancellor's Chair for Research Excellence, the Humanities Research Centre at Brock University, and Brock University Experience Works. Very special thanks go to my research assistants, Darcy Berry, Assuntina Del Gobbo, and Carlene Thomas, who have enthusiastically shared my passion for crossover picturebooks.

Chapter One
Picturebooks as a Crossover Genre

> There is no art for children, there is Art. There are no graphics for children, there are graphics. . . . There is no literature for children, there is literature.
>
> **—François Ruy-Vidal**

Crossover Picturebooks: A Genre for All Ages is a follow-up to *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives*, which was published by Routledge in 2009. The earlier book deals generally with the phenomenon of crossover literature, and more specifically with novels and short fiction that cross from child to adult or adult to child audiences, while the present study focuses on picturebooks for all ages. The original intention was to include picturebooks in the first volume, but crossover literature is such an important and largely unexplored cultural phenomenon that a single book was insufficient to address all the genres that transcend age boundaries. Although crossover fiction is now widely recognized as a distinct literary form and marketing category by critics, publishers, booksellers, writers, and readers, the term "crossover" is still often used only to refer to children's and young adult novels read by adults. Picturebooks have not generally been seen as part of the crossover phenomenon, even though the trend of picturebooks for all ages pre-dated the landmark Harry Potter series. In September 1997, prior to the crossover hype, Judith Rosen published "Breaking the Age Barrier," one of the rare articles in English-speaking countries to deal not only with young adult fiction but also with picturebooks. The almost complete lack of attention paid to picturebooks within the discussion of crossover literature in most countries is particularly surprising since, more than any other genre, they can genuinely be books for all ages. This study seeks to address the neglect of a genre that deserves special attention within the widespread and ever expanding global trend of crossover literature.

Picturebooks are quite distinct from other narrative forms due to the complex interplay of text and image (or, perhaps more accurately, verbal and visual texts). In her insightful study *Radical Children's Literature*, Kimberley Reynolds attributes much of children's literature's ability to stimulate and nurture innovation to the fact that "many children's texts operate two semiotic systems simultaneously: the visual and the textual." Referring to picturebooks in particular in a 1990 article, David Lewis attributes their capacity for innovation to what he calls their "inescapably plural" nature.[1] This unique feature of picturebooks is what makes them one of the most exciting and innovative contemporary literary genres. It is often the experimental or "radical" nature of these picturebooks that gives them appeal with adults as well as children, as I discussed in a paper titled "Breaking Boundaries with Radical Picture Books" in 2002.[2] This is not an entirely new phenomenon, as Chapter 2 clearly demonstrates, but today's picturebooks repeatedly challenge the conventions, codes, and norms that traditionally governed the genre. Profound, often controversial content, some of which will be discussed in Chapter 5, and complex narrative strategies—hybrid genres, polyfocalization, metafictive discourse, intertextuality, parody, irony, and so forth—in both text and image provide narratives that are attracting an ever-increasing older audience of adolescents and adults to the genre. Several studies examine the so-called sophisticated techniques of contemporary picturebooks that are often referred to as "postmodernist," but without considering them in the context of the crossover phenomenon.[3] The innovative graphics and creative, often complex dialogue between text and image provide multiple levels of meaning and invite readings on different levels by all ages.

Picturebooks offer a unique opportunity for a collaborative or shared reading experience between children and adults, since they empower the two audiences more equally than other narrative forms. Carole Scott seems to place crossover picturebooks among the masterpieces of children's literature for this reason when she writes: "I believe that enduring works of children's literature are those with dual address that speak to both children and adults, and that picturebooks offer the greatest equality in the reading experience, since pre-literate children can engage in reading the pictures as the adult reads them the verbal text." As she and many other critics now point out, modern children often have better visual literacy skills than adults.[4] In addition to being more skilled at reading graphic details, they are often more receptive to untraditional visual and verbal narratives than adults. When the German edition of David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001) appeared in 2002, it provoked a controversial discussion about whether it was a book for children, for adults, or for all ages. Despite the age recommendation of four years and up, many critics found it difficult to believe that children could understand the 2002 Caldecott Medal-winning picturebook, which presents rather difficult philosophical ideas about reality and fiction.[5] However, Lawrence Sipe's 2008 case study convincingly demonstrates that young children can appreciate and even offer surprisingly sophisticated interpretations of this complex text.[6] Child-to-adult crossover literature is often equated with "dumbing

down," but in actual fact, many crossover picturebooks offer challenging reading experiences for adults as well as children.

The picturebook has traditionally been seen as a children's genre. The critic Barbara Bader expressed this widespread view in 1976 when she wrote that a picturebook is "foremost an experience for a child" and Perry Nodelman echoes it in 1988 when he describes picturebooks as "books intended for young children."[7] A preliminary comment in a 1993 edition of *Papers* sums up the situation in the following words: "The picture book has, since its creation, been considered the prerogative of the young child. It will take much persuasion to destroy this image, despite the complexities which are quite clearly seen in today's picture books."[8] In the eyes of many contemporary authors and illustrators, the picturebook is a narrative form that can address any or all age groups. Authors and illustrators often deny and defy publishers' very age-specific categories of readers. Publishers themselves are questioning these borders and even creating series for all ages. The picturebook is, after all, merely a format. In 1997, Regina Hayes, president and publisher of Viking Children's Books, who has brought out a number of crossover picturebooks, used the fact that the picturebook is "just a format" to argue that there is no reason why its audience should be limited to children. Averse to the term "sophisticated picture books," she prefers to think of the works of the authors and illustrators she publishes, including J. otto Seibold, Jon Scieszka, Maira Kalman, and Istvan Banyai, as "'bridge books,' since they form a bridge between traditional picture books and longer works." The same year, the vice-president and associate publisher at Disney/Hyperion, Ken Geist, admitted he deliberately tries to place some crossover titles in a picturebook format.[9] Why should stories that fit into the thirty-two-page picturebook format automatically be released as children's books? The perception that picturebooks are essentially a genre for children is shifting more rapidly in some countries than others. In Norway, where the term *allalderslitteratur* (all-ages-literature) was coined in the 1980s, picturebooks are now widely considered under this rubrique as well. The crossover appeal of *Garmanns Sommer* (2006; English trans., *Garmann's Summer*), which was the first book from the Nordic countries to win the Bologna Ragazzi Award in 2007, is, according to the author-illustrator Stian Hole, "a characteristic trait in modern Scandinavian picture books, which are often labeled 'All-age books.'"[10]

Maurice Sendak, probably the world's best-known picturebook artist, has been claiming for years that "we have created an arbitrary division between adult and children's books that does not exist." Although he refers here to children's literature in general, using the example of Lewis Carroll, who "didn't set out to write for children," but rather to "writ[e] books," his own concern is picturebooks in particular: "What I write takes as much intense effort, as much creativity and dramatic sense as the so-called grown-up books."[11] When *Outside Over There* was released by Harper and Row in 1981 as a book for both children and adults, Sendak told Selma Lanes that he had "waited a long time to be taken out of kiddy-book land and allowed to join the artists of America."[12] Geraldine

DeLuca suggests, however, that "Sendak, in his quest for both audiences, may actually be leaving the child behind."[13] A number of critics expressed the view that Sendak's *We Are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy*, published in 1993, is no longer a picturebook for children. Jane Doonan writes that it might seem that "only adults with a religious background, and with knowledge of the Holocaust, would be able to make anything of *Dumps* and that Sendak has produced a picture book for them rather than for children." This is not, however, the opinion of the critic, who continues: "It would be truer to say that he has created something that does not conform to generic expectations about picture books as children's literature only. *Dumps* shares with certain other modern picture books a quality that was formerly the preserve of folk and fairy tales: an open address."[14]

Sendak's views were shared by innovative publishers of the time and some children's publishing houses were founded with the express goal of producing picturebooks that abolish boundaries between children's literature and adult literature. One of the unsung pioneers was Robert Delpire, who was the first French publisher of Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, published as *Max et les Maximonstres* in 1967. Delpire was at the origin of a graphic and thematic renewal of the picturebook that preceded the daring innovations of Harlin Quist and François Ruy-Vidal. The intended audience of the sophisticated children's books published by the controversial American publisher Harlin Quist has always been a subject of debate. His remarkable works were avant-garde when he began publishing in the 1960s and they remain so today. They featured some of Europe's most innovative young artists, including Nicole Claveloux, Étienne Delessert, and Henri Galeron, many of whom launched their careers with Harlin Quist. The unique and quirky look he brought to children's book publishing during the late 1960s left an indelible mark that is expressed in a *New York Times* statement printed on the back cover of one of the most famous Quist books, *The Geranium on the Windowsill Just Died but Teacher You Went Right On* (1971): "There are few publishers whose books are so distinctive that the mention of their names conjures up an immediate picture of a recognizable style. One such publisher is Harlin Quist." Despite the immediate attention and wide acclaim his books attracted everywhere sales in the United States did not match the enthusiasm. With the exception of a few bestselling titles like *The Geranium on the Windowsill Just Died*, which sold over half a million copies, they were bought primarily by a loyal following of adults. In North America today, they are remembered chiefly by a relatively small number of collectors who appreciate their innovation and striking artwork and design.

In 1968, a year after the creation of Harlin Quist Books, Quist established a partnership with François Ruy-Vidal that enabled him to publish and distribute his books in Europe as well as in the United States. During the six years he worked with Quist, Ruy-Vidal convinced great names of French literature, such as Eugene Ionesco and Marguerite Duras, to publish for children. His philosophy was to never work with children's authors and illustrators. Quist and Ruy-Vidal published the first of Ionesco's classic children's stories, *Conte numéro 1* (English trans., *Story Number 1*), in 1968, the same year that the

four Contes pour enfants de moins de trois ans (Stories for children under the age of three) appeared in the author's memoir, *Présent passé, passé présent* (1968; English trans., *Present Past, Past Present*). In a *New York Times* article devoted to "Picture Books" in 1970, Barbara Novak, an influential theorist of American art, suggests that Ionesco's "radical innovation" pushed the children's book market further into "simple-mindedness and banality," producing books that are "an insult to any self-respecting age group." With regard to *Story Number 2* in particular, she writes: "It is the most natural thing in the world for Ionesco to write for children. The reversal of usual relationships, the fantasy, the credibility he donates to the incredible, along with the sheer delight in nonsense, all are more readily assimilable by children than by their elders." Novak sees Ionesco's tale, in which "reality becomes a matter of many alternative choices," proof of a counter trend of increasingly sophisticated picturebooks.[15] In *Radical Children's Literature*, Kimberley Reynolds uses the example of Ionesco's tales to show how "during the time when it was regarded as a mode suited only for the nursery, nonsense . . . anticipated and was called into the service of modernist movements in literature."[16] Children's literature provided the Theatre of the Absurd playwright with a genre in which he could pursue his aesthetic experiments with language and the absurd, and he introduces young readers to some rather complex notions in his deceptively simple stories. All the Harlin Quist books had a very European look and to this day they remain unique in American children's publishing.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, François Ruy-Vidal worked with several publishing houses, radically transforming the world of children's books by publishing authors and illustrators who were not specialized in children's literature. Critics often reproached him for creating books for adults rather than children, but Ruy-Vidal categorically refused to accept the specificity of children's literature. The theories he formulated more than forty years ago could constitute the credo of many crossover authors, illustrators, and publishers today:

> There is no art for children, there is Art. There are no graphics for children, there are graphics. There are no colours for children, there are colours. There is no literature for children, there is literature. Based on these four principles, we can say that a children's book is a good book when it is a good book for everyone.[17]

Ruy-Vidal was not merely echoing the vague, oft-expressed view of C. S. Lewis and many other authors: that a good children's book also appeals to adults. He was determined to avoid publishing books that were "formatted, targeted, utilitarian," so that he would be open to the more "authentic" projects proposed to him by authors and illustrators. Rejecting what he called the "false books" that abounded in children's publishing, his formula was to produce true books, that is, unique, creative works that take risks, have an emotional charge, and provoke reaction and reflection on the part of the reader. In addition to this precise notion of literature, Ruy-Vidal's goal was to "restore to children's book illustration . . .

its *lettres de noblesse* by ridding it of the stereotypes that traditionalist publishing was abusing,"[18] a goal he set out to achieve by engaging some of the most controversial young illustrators of the day, not only in the books he published with Harlin Quist but also in the many books he brought out later. Ruy-Vidal's groundbreaking children's books caused quite a stir in France in the 1960s and they continued to surprise and provoke in subsequent years.

Like his precursors Harlin Quist and François Ruy-Vidal, the French author and publisher Christian Bruel is known for his pioneering, visually sophisticated, and often provocative picturebooks whose ambivalent audience has been the subject of similar controversy. Between 1976 and 1996, Bruel directed the experimental publishing house Le Sourire qui mord (The biting smile), which had its origins in a collective of scholars, journalists, and artists created following the events of May 1968 with the aim of rethinking and renewing children's picturebooks. Their philosophy is hidden in the anagram of the publishing house's unusual name, "Le risque ou dormir" (Risk or sleep). It was founded with the express intention of breaking down the barrier between child and adult readers and eliminating the stereotypes and taboos in children's literature. Bruel objects to the idea of "livres pour enfants" (books for children), promoting instead stories that are accessible to children yet touch adults. "To make books for children is an error," he claimed in 1970, proposing instead that it is more appropriate "to make books that can be put into children's hands also." The publisher's views never changed. Two years before the disappearance of Le Sourire qui mord, the first page of the 1994 catalogue insists that a book is ultimately about "life," life that can sometimes be "crunched between baby teeth and wisdom teeth. . . ."

A number of avant-garde publishing houses were created with the intention of working especially with the image and graphic storytelling. Danielle Dastugue, who created Éditions du Rouergue in 1986, decided, in 1993, to develop a series of children's books largely dedicated to images and contemporary graphic expression. The catalyst for the new children's collection was the talented young artist Olivier Douzou, who came to her with the storyboard for his first book, *Jojo La Mache*, in 1993, and agreed to become the director. Determined to create unique books that would expand and renew the field of children's publishing, they published, for the most part, first-time illustrators from France as well as all over Europe, Latin America, Canada, and the United States. Critics generally agree that Rouergue's picturebooks are among the most innovative publications in French children's publishing in the 1990s. The publishing house has also gained an international reputation and a number of titles have been translated into several languages. The picturebooks published by Rouergue marked a rupture with earlier children's books, presenting a new relationship to childhood, an openness to new modes of expression, and a critical view of the world. Their innovative approach has been compared to that of the Sourire qui mord, which ceased to exist only three years after the creation of Rouergue.

The Spanish publishing house Media Vaca, established in Valencia in 1998 by Vicente Ferrer, shares a similar editorial philosophy, addressing sophisticated children's books to a crossover audience. Their series Libros para niños

(children's books) targets "children of all ages" and beside the series title on the back cover is the recommendation "¡NO SÓLO para niños!" (NOT ONLY for children). If the "children's books" published by Media Vaca seem difficult, it is because Ferrer believes that children should never be given "boring" books; the publisher's catalogue accuses the creators of tedious children's books of thinking like tailors, that is, of believing that "children's books should be like children's suits: smaller by several sizes." Children don't have to understand everything in the books they read, insists Ferrer, who pointedly reminds us that adults don't comprehend everything either.[19] Media Vaca was created as an alternative to the highly conventional Spanish children's books of the 1990s, which Ferrer felt lacked complexity and multilayering. In his view, such books are created for a model of child that does not exist, that is, a child unable to feel things that she cannot explain or express in a rational manner. Media Vaca publishes complex books that do not invite rapid and comfortable reading but require effort and reflection. In their catalogue, the publisher justifies the appearance in the Libros para niños series in 2000 of *Los niños tontos* (Foolish children), written in 1956 by Ana María Matute, who stated that it is "not a book for children," but a book "about children." According to Ferrer, it was included in their catalogue because it is "a book about childhood, which is the most important part of anyone's life." The first page of the Media Vaca catalogue quotes an anonymous writer who left the following message on a wall in Valencia in 2002:

> Life is as short
> as the word life.
> Childhood is as long
> as the word childhood.

Javier Olivares illustrated Matute's stories "so that we 'grown-ups' may remember that it has not been long since we had a different life, and so that smaller persons may know that the things that they are thinking or that are happening to them have already been thought or lived through by others before them. . . ."[20] These publishers all seek to offer picturebooks that bring the generations together. They acknowledge the continuum between children's and adults' understanding and experience and the continuity that connects readers of all ages.

Like the books in Media Vaca's Libros para niños series, many picturebooks announce their implied crossover audience in the paratext. Sometimes the book's author is responsible for the paratextual element (title, dedication, preface, afterword, etc.) that makes the crossover claim. The recommendation: "Ages: All" appears in small, discrete letters on the inside of the dust jacket of Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith's hugely successful *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, published in 1992. As this is a picturebook that, like Wiesner's *Three Pigs*, lays bare the book and story making process, and self-consciously plays with paratexts, the author is obviously responsible for the age recommendation, as well as the words "Reinforced Binding" added below to convey the message that the book is sturdy enough to withstand the abuse of

very young readers. It is not just in recent years that the paratext has played a crucial role in determining a crossover audience for a picturebook. In 1947, the German novelist and graphic artist Hans Leip gave the subtitle "Ein Bilderbuch nicht nur für Kinder/A Picture Book not only for Children" to *Das Zauberschiff/The Magic Ship*, a remarkable bilingual picturebook published for his four daughters. *A Visit to William Blake's Inn*, published in 1981 by the American author and illustrator Nancy Willard, also announces its intended dual audience in the subtitle "Poems for Innocent and Experienced Travelers," which refers transparently to Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Rather than

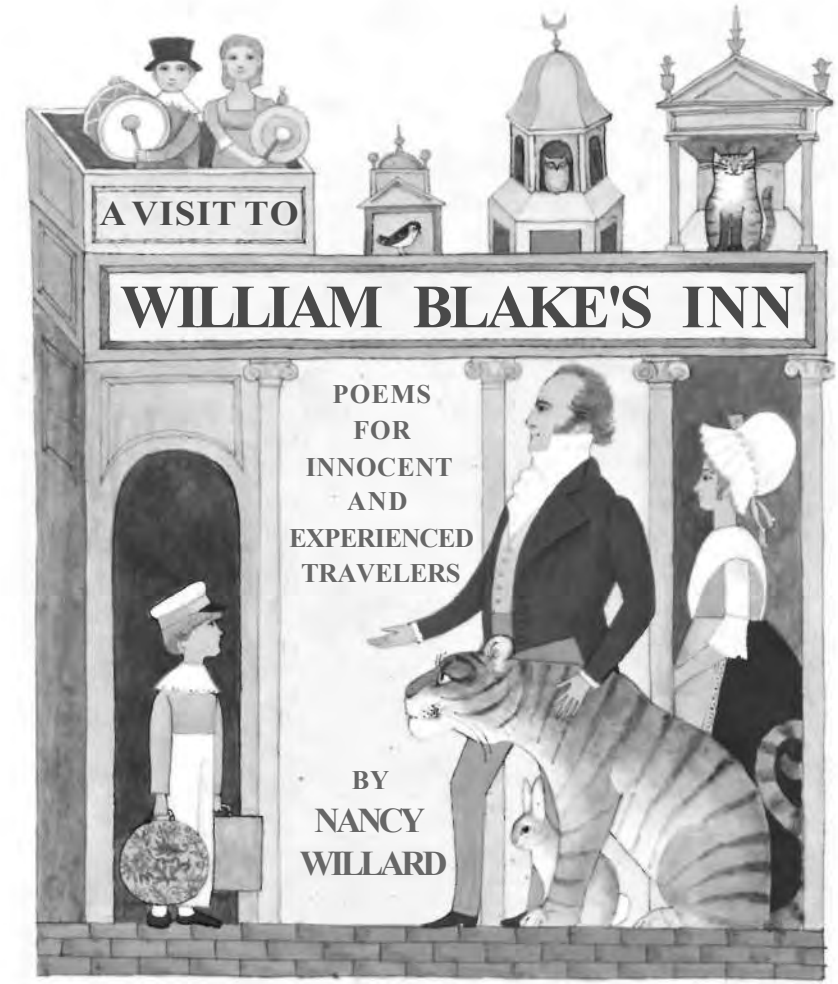

Figure 1.1 A Visit to William Blake's Inn by Nancy Willard, copyright © 1981, illustrated by Alice Provensen and Martin Provensen, reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Inc.

leaving the author's subtitle to convey a more subtle message about dual audience, the publisher explicitly tells potential buyers on the dust jacket that this is a book for "readers of all ages." Sometimes publishers even take it upon themselves to alter paratextual matter to emphasize the book's crossover appeal. Although all Ionesco's children's stories are billed in his memoir as tales "for children under three years of age," *Story Number 4* became a tale "for children of any age," according to the front cover of the English edition illustrated by Jean-Michel Nicollet.

Often it is the publisher who specifies in the paratext that a particular picturebook is meant for a crossover audience. This is most frequently done in the blurb on the cover or dust jacket. It may also take the form of a publishers' note in the front matter, as in the case of the bestselling *The Geranium on the Windowsill Just Died but Teacher You Went Right On*. The author, Albert Cullum, dedicates it "to all those grownups who as children, died in the arms of compulsory education," while the publisher's note insists on the crossover audience addressed by both the author and illustrators (the twenty-eight different illustrators include Nicole Claveloux, Guy Billout, Henri Galeron, and Claude Lapointe):

> They speak to children as from children;
> they speak to adults as from adults.
> They are adults speaking to adults
> and to children from their own childhoods;
> They tell of the hearts of children now . . .

On the back cover of the South African picturebook *Carnival of the Animals*, in which the writer and singer Philip de Vos and the illustrator Piet Grobler present whimsical creatures ranging from smoking tortoises in fishnet stockings who dream of doing the can-can to pianists (who, according to the author, belong with the beasts in the zoo), the publisher bills it as "a book for children of all ages (and for others who have remained young at heart)." When *Ein Tisch ist ein Tisch* (A table is a table), Peter Bichsel's sad story of a lonely, bored old man who invents his own language, was published in 1995 in picturebook format by the German publisher Suhrkamp with sophisticated graphics by Angela von Roehl, the publisher's insert stated that the picturebook was intended "for children, young people, and adults."[21] The blurb on the back cover of Tohby Riddle's *The Great Escape from City Zoo* (1997), which was shortlisted for both the Children's Book Council of Australia Picture Book of the Year Award and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, rightly suggests that the book "soars straight and true right across age barriers. . . ." The marked increase in such recommendations in recent years may be the influence of marketing strategies being used for juvenile fiction, but they nonetheless have a well-established history dating back at least to the 1940s.

It is often pointed out that adults appreciate the artwork and the high aesthetic quality of many picturebooks. At the same time, the books examined in

this study challenge and dispel the widespread assumption that young children are not interested in artistically sophisticated picturebooks. Many publishing houses founded with a crossover editorial philosophy set out to accomplish that goal with aesthetically beautiful picturebooks illustrated by talented artists and produced on high quality paper using the best possible printing techniques. The Japanese publisher Yasoo Takeuchi could be considered a pioneer in this domain, as he founded the Shiko-sha publishing house in Tokyo in 1949 with the conviction that a picturebook is "a work of art in itself, and is therefore not intended only for children." Shiko-sha has a reputation for artistic picturebooks printed on high quality paper. Their motto, as billed on their website, is: "Picture books for children from 0–99 years."[22] Many of Harlin Quist's books were large, lavish editions, which set a new standard of excellence in children's book publishing in the 1960s. In response to editorial constraints that dominated French children's book publishing, Nicole Maymat founded the publishing house Ipomée in 1973, in collaboration with the printer Dominique Beaufils. Maymat situates Ipomée, whose books are renowned for their aesthetic beauty, among other small publishing houses, such as Le Sourire qui mord, that were concerned with aesthetics of a non-commercial nature and wanted to offer readers "a different text/image relationship."[23] According to Maymat, they were resolved "to address sensitivities rather than age brackets." She repeatedly compares the risky position of those involved to that of funambulists (the funambulist is almost an iconic image of the publishing house), as they were trying to walk the tightrope of the so-called "border" between child readers and adult readers: "Alas! [she states] Books are classified in this manner and illustrated books 'are not intended for adults.' At least that's the way it was at the beginning of the 80s but the computer has not helped matters recently: a pigeonhole for each book, no more!"[24]

Ipomée was representative of a demanding aesthetic quality that was exceptional in the world of children's books. In her study *Une esthétique contemporaine de l'album de jeunesse* (A contemporary aesthetic of the children's picturebook), Jocelyne Béguery states that Ipomée's "aestheticizing choice" and their "preoccupation" with the book as a "beautiful object" led certain people to apply the term "bibliophilism" to their books, a term that the publisher categorically rejects.[25] Believing that all children have the right to "precious" books with high quality paper and printing, the small French publishing house Grandir, on the other hand, expressly uses the term "bibliophilism" to describe their goal: they wanted to introduce "bibliophilism for children" into the field of children's book publishing.[26] Founded by René Turc in 1978, Grandir produces high quality picturebooks of a very innovative nature. The name Grandir means "to grow up" and reflects an intention to provide books that take readers from childhood to adulthood. Some critics have questioned whether Grandir's books are really children's books, but Turc and his wife, both former teachers, have a great deal of respect for "the young reader's sensitivity and depth of judgment" and know, like Sendak, that the problem does

Figure 1.2 *L'histoire d'Héliacynthe* by Nicole Maymat, illustrated by Frédéric Clément, copyright © 1979 Ipomée, reprinted by permission of Nicole Maymat.

not lie with children. Turc explains: "It is adults who are in question here rather than children: they sometimes feel helpless when faced with Grandir's books, which are too different from what they usually see." According to the French publisher, bookstores and others weren't ready to distribute their "marginal books" in the early years.[27] It seems that the market was not ready for the avant-garde books of many of these publishers. In the latter half of the 1970s, the Quist books became smaller and less impressive, and in the 1980s

the publisher was forced to branch out and add art monographs. For financial reasons, Ipomée was obliged to enter into association first with Albin Michel. Le Sourire qui mord was eventually forced to sign a distribution agreement with Gallimard and finally ceased to exist in 1996, although Christian Bruel lost no time in founding a new publishing house, Éditions Être (To be), which was launched the following year. In 2000, Rouergue found itself forced to join with Actes Sud, once again indicating the vulnerability of this unusual (some would say marginal) literature that rejects fashions, trends, conventions, and marketing demands.

Even today it is not easy for innovative publishers who refuse to make concessions with regard to aesthetic quality and generic expectations. The Danish author Oscar K., a pen name for Ole Dalgaard, claimed in 2008 that the "great artistic quality" of books falling into the crossover category is "a problem, because they can be difficult to fit into the framework generally laid out by adults for children's books."[28] In May 2010 after more than thirty-five years of publishing unusual, challenging picturebooks, Christian Bruel publicly announced the imminent closing of Éditions Être; the next day a group was set up on Facebook to try to save the distinctive publishing house. Many books by these avant-garde publishers, books that were reputed to be too difficult and inappropriate for children, have been reissued in recent years, often by small new publishing houses. Bruel's Éditions Être brought out new editions of many titles from Le Sourire qui mord catalogue and Ruy-Vidal likewise republished many titles from the 1970s and 1980s when he created Éditions des Lires, including Marguerite Duras's *Ah! Ernesto!* (2004) first published with Harlin Quist in 1971. *The Geranium on the Windowsill Just Died but Teacher You Went Right On* appeared in a new edition in 2000, its commentary on teachers and education—illustrative of Cullum's educational philosophy—apparently just as relevant in the new millennium. The substitution of new illustrations suggests, however, that the publisher considered the original illustrations still too avant-garde for the American public thirty years later. Some of these innovative works have been republished recently by large, well-established publishers, such as Gallimard Jeunesse or Seuil Jeunesse. Paul Cox's *Mon amour* (My love), first published by Le Sourire qui mord in 1992, was reissued by Seuil Jeunesse in 2003. In 2009, an omnibus edition of all four of Ionesco's children's stories was released by Gallimard Jeunesse, with illustrations by Étienne Delessert, to mark the centenary of the author's birth, but it did not appear in an English edition. A number of pioneering authors, illustrators, and publishers whose picturebooks had broken new ground in the 1960s and 1970s left the field of children's literature due to the constraints and conventions that continued to govern the genre, but have been drawn back by the exciting developments of the past couple of decades. Following a fifteen-year hiatus, Harlin Quist began publishing books again in the 1990s, reissuing some of his previous children's titles in addition to releasing new ones for European distribution. Ruy-Vidal returned to the French publishing

scene with the creation of the publishing house Éditions Des Lires in 2003. After an absence of almost twenty-five years, Tomi Ungerer made his much-heralded comeback with *Flix* in 1998, winning the Hans Christian Andersen Award for illustration the same year. Contemporary crossover picturebooks owe much to the efforts of these pioneers who have been pushing back the boundaries of the genre for decades.

In the past, adults were generally seen only as co-readers or mediators of picturebooks, but now they are being recognized as readers in their own right. While this is not an entirely new phenomenon, adults now seem more willing to acknowledge the fact that they buy picturebooks for their own pleasure. Stian Hole goes even further, happily confessing: "When I was a boy, I read adult novels and poetry. As a grown-up, I read mostly children's stories."[29] The phenomenon of adults reading picturebooks seems to mark the ultimate transgression of the conventional age borders that have been arbitrarily created between children's books and adult books. In 1995, the critic Arne Marius Samuelsen drew the attention of the Norwegian public to the dual audience of picturebooks in a book titled *Billedboken: en glede og utfordring også for voksne* (The picturebook: A pleasure and challenge for adults too). Many adults have discovered the pleasure that Samuelsen discusses, seriously collecting picturebooks for their own use and enjoyment. A few publishers in the English-speaking countries were also acknowledging that fact in the 1990s. In 1997, Ken Geist of Disney/Hyperion, who "buys children's books for adults all the time," confessed his love for books like the nursery staple *Goodnight Moon* (1947) and the zany bestselling alphabet book *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (1989).[30]

Like other forms of children's books, the genre of picturebooks contains many classics that have always been much-loved by readers of all ages. Geist mentions *Goodnight Moon*, which was first published in 1947 and only gradually grew to be a bestseller, but is now a classic favourite with adults as well as children in North America. It was number eight on the *Publishers Weekly* Children's Hardcover Backlist in 2009 with sales of 653,140. Adults have always enjoyed William Steig's picturebooks, including the Caldecott Award-winning *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* (1969) and the Newbery Honour Book *Doctor De Soto* (1982). One of the most notable examples of picturebook classics is Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. The appeal of these picturebooks with adults may be due in large part to the nostalgia for books they loved as children; they, in turn, pass them on to their own children. Some picturebooks could even be said to have a similar cult following to the children's novels, such as *Winnie-the-Pooh*, discussed in *Crossover Fiction*.[31]

Throughout the twentieth-century, there were picturebook series that captured the hearts of all ages. Since Jean de Brunhoff published *Histoire de Babar* (English trans., *The Story of Babar*) to immediate success in 1931, the Babar books have remained favourites with children and adults alike despite the harsh criticism they have faced in recent years. The Curious George books

also fall into this category; they have been continuously reedited ever since Hans Augusto Rey and Margret Rey published the first title, *Curious George*, in 1941. The store Curious George Goes to WordsWorth in Cambridge, Massachusetts claims many of its customers are adults or college students and a large percentage of the fans who visit their website are also adults.[32] A number of more contemporary picturebook series have a faithful following of adults not only in their own countries, but also internationally. In 1985, the Swedish author-illustrator Sven Nordqvist published *Pannkakstårtan* (English trans., *Pancake Pie*), the first book in his hugely popular Pettson och Findus series, known in the United States as the Festus and Mercury series (although the original names are retained in some English translations). The books about the forgetful old farmer Pettson and his talented talking cat, Findus, charm readers of all ages thanks to the unique humour and quirky, richly detailed pictures. The series, which has nine books to date, has worldwide sales of over six million and has been translated into forty-four languages. Four years after Nordqvist launched his series, the Dutch author-illustrator Max Velthuijs published the first book in his famous Frog series, *Kikker is verliefd* (English trans., *Frog in Love*, 1989). As Toin Duijx states in her article about the winner of the 2004 Andersen Illustrator Award, "every child (and adult) in The Netherlands knows about the adventures of Frog."[33] He is very familiar to readers of all ages in other parts of the world as well. Published in more than fifty languages, the books about the loveable protagonist have captured the hearts of young and not-so-young around the globe. Picturebook series with crossover appeal are not limited to Western book markets. Hirokazu Miyazaki's Wanikun (Little Crocodile) books about a loveable crocodile, which the Japanese author-illustrator began publishing in the 1980s, also found their way into the hearts of older readers in Japan and at least two have been published in English.[34] Miki Takahashi's unusual picturebook series about Kogeban (Burnt Bread)—a creation of the Japanese corporation San-X that has also inspired an anime series for television and diverse merchandise—offers an existential discussion of life seen through the eyes of a burnt loaf of red bean bread.

Some picturebooks are widely bought and read by readers of all ages because they constitute traditional gifts on certain special occasions in life, taking the place of a greeting card. Robert Munsch's tribute to mothers and their enduring love, *Love You Forever*, is a frequent Mother's Day gift. First published in 1986, it was number four on the 2001 *Publishers Weekly* "All-Time Bestselling Children's Books" list for paperbacks at almost seven million copies and also appeared on the hardcover list (number 128) with over a million copies.[35] The role reversal at the end of *Love You Forever* is not unlike that expressed in the French author-illustrator Grégoire Solotareff's *Toi grand et moi petit* (1996; You big and me small), which makes a very fitting Father's Day gift. It tells the story of the inseparable relationship between a little orphan elephant and the large lion who reluctantly adopts him, even after the elephant becomes much larger than the lion. Winner of the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis in 1997, *Toi*

grand et moi petit is one of Solotareff's most popular books with adults as well as children. In the 1990s, the beloved Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel) published a number of trademark picturebooks that fall into this category. *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* (1990) has been finding its way onto bestseller lists every spring for more than two decades because it is such a customary gift for university and college graduates. In 2009, it was number twelve on the *Publishers Weekly* children's hardcover backlist with 455,725 copies. In 1997, Henry Holt senior editor Marc Aronson stated: "It's easy for adults to make the leap to picture books—28 or 32 beautiful pictures that cost less than an adult book. Picture books tend to have a compact emotional message, and adults tend to use them almost as a Hallmark card. . . ."[36] Not all picturebooks-cum-cards rely on emotional appeal, as witnessed by Dr Seuss's *Seuss-isms*, published in 1997. The collection of "wise and witty prescriptions for living" intended to guide young and old alike along the path of life makes a suitable cross-generational gift for a variety of occasions. The sequel, *Seuss-isms for Success* (1999), which focuses on survival in the business world, is reviewed on the Amazon.com site as "Just right for a recent MBA or graduate."[37] Having three sons with MBAs, we have more than one copy in the family.

A relatively small number of picturebooks attain overnight success with audiences of all ages. This is the case for a few celebrity picturebooks, notably Madonna's *The English Roses* (2003), which will be considered along with other crossover celebrity picturebooks in Chapter 6. It is highly doubtful, however, that many celebrity picturebooks will have the same long-term following as bestselling picturebooks by well-loved children's authors and illustrators. The second picturebook by Wolf Erlbruch, *Vom kleinen Maulwurf, der wissen wollte, wer ihm auf den Kopf gemacht hat* (1989; English trans., *The Story of the Little Mole Who Knew It Was None of His Business* and *The Story of the Little Mole Who Went in Search of Whodunit*), with text by Werner Holzwarth, was a phenomenal international success. By the year 2000, more than a million copies had been sold and it had been translated into at least eighteen languages. The book's tremendous appeal with a universal audience of readers of all ages was largely due to the humorous treatment of the scatological, Rabelaisian element. Erlbruch does not hesitate to depict explicitly the unmentionable bodily function of defecating that the author only alludes to in the text, and in so doing, echoes children's joy of transgressing. In 2007 it was made available to a new generation in a "plop-up edition." *The Story of the Little Mole Who Went in Search of Whodunit* is the ultimate bathroom book for all ages. Picturebooks may also become overnight bestsellers only within a specific country or language market. When Beltz & Gelberg published *Ottos Mops*, the most famous poem by the Austrian poet Ernst Jandl, as a picturebook with illustrations by the German illustrator Norman Junge in 2001, a year after the poet's death, it became an instant bestseller with adults and children alike in German-speaking countries. The success was undoubtedly due not only to the immense popularity of the dazzling masterpiece about the dog Mops and his

master Otto, which is told using only the vowel "o," but also to the timing, as the death of the poet the previous year turned the book into a kind of homage to his memory.

Crossover picturebooks are multilevelled works that are suitable for all ages because they invite different forms of reading, depending on the age and experience of the reader. These multilayered books can be read over and over, providing new meaning with each reading. Children, adolescents, and adults read crossover picturebooks from their various perspectives, but they can all take equal pleasure in the reading experience. The disarmingly simple story of a book like *The Great Escape from City Zoo* can be enjoyed by very young children, but Tohby Riddle, who is a cartoonist for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, also successfully appeals to adults with his subtle popular culture references and his unique humour. Cartoonists often bring to picturebooks a genre of humour that appeals to young and old alike. The quirky pen-and-ink colour illustrations by Chris Riddell, who is also a political cartoonist for *The Observer*, add to the adult appeal of *Something Else* (1994) by the British author Kathryn Cave. The charming story about discrimination and tolerance, which the author wrote after listening to her then seven-year-old daughter on their way to school, won the first UNESCO Prize for Children's Literature in the Service of Tolerance (under 8s), but Cave claims on her website to write "for children of all ages" and a German bookseller told me it was a bestseller with readers of all ages in that country. Children enjoy the nonsense, reminiscent of Ogden Nash, in the playful verse of *Carnival of the Animals*, while adults will appreciate the darker undertones as well as the intertextual and cultural references (the entire book is inspired by the music of Camille Saint-Saëns). Stian Hole, who particularly likes the fact that adults and children often read picturebooks together, says that when he reads with his own children he appreciates "the small messages and humor in the story that is there for [him] as an adult reader."[38] Sophisticated intertextual allusions that cannot be decoded by children and seem to be there for the enjoyment of adults are a common trait of crossover picturebooks. Chapter 4 is devoted to the common practice of referencing the fine arts in contemporary picturebooks.

Even more so than other types of children's books, picturebooks that win major children's literature prizes are often those with strong adult appeal. This is not surprising since adults make up the jury for the majority of awards. Publishers with a crossover editorial policy have garnered a large share of these awards. Shiko-sha, for example, has won numerous international book prizes, including the Bratislava BIB Golden Apple Prize and the Bologna Children's Book Fair's Graphic Award. The relative newcomer Media Vaca, which publishes only three titles per year, has received several awards at the Bologna Book Fair; in 2002, they won the Bologna Ragazzi Award in both the fiction and non-fiction categories for Oliveiro Dumas's *El señor Korbes y otros cuentos de Grimm* (Mr. Korbes and other tales by the Brothers Grimm, 2001), which is intended, according to the publisher's catalogue, "to frighten and delight

both young and old," and *Una temporada en Calcuta* (A season in Calcutta, 2001), by Lluïsot. Winning major international literary prizes is not a guarantee, unfortunately, that these outstanding books will be translated into English. Some are simply too unconventional for the Anglo-American markets. Even picturebooks by Wolf Erlbruch, winner of the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 2006, have never, or have only recently, been published in English (*Die fürchterlichen Fünf* [English trans., *The Fearsome Five*] appeared in English almost twenty years after its publication in German in 1990). This study examines a wide range of crossover picturebooks from around the world, many of which have never been published in English. It focuses on contemporary picturebooks, with emphasis on those published since 1990, although important earlier examples are also mentioned to provide a historical context. *Crossover Picturebooks: A Genre for All Ages* attempts to offer a global and cross-cultural perspective on a genre that plays an essential role in the crossover phenomenon. In many countries around the world, innovative works by picturebook artists challenge and dispel the widespread assumption that picturebooks are only for children.

Chapter Two
Artists' Books

> The artist's book is a conquest of new territory.
>
> —**Henri Cueco**

Some of the most innovative crossover picturebooks fall into the category of what have been termed "'artists' books' for children." Although artists' books have been called "the quintessential 20th-century artform,"[1] the definition and the term itself are still the subject of much debate. This study adopts the term "artists' books," as it has become the most widespread, but often "artist's" is written in the singular or even without the apostrophe. Numerous other labels are also used to refer to these books, including book art, bookworks, and book objects. Often artists' books are defined in terms of what they are not, and one website begins by categorically claiming: "They are not children's books."[2] In fact, some of the most innovative artists' books are intended for young readers. Unfortunately, they are, for the most part, not well-known, unobtainable, and overlooked by critics. In France, "les livres d'artiste pour enfants" have received some scholarly attention, for the most part thanks to Les Trois Ourses, an association founded by several librarians in 1988 to promote artists' books for children and make them available to French readers.[3] The French publishing house Éditions MeMo, which collaborates with Les Trois Ourses, specializes in artists' books for children from the past as well as the present. In Italy, Maurizio and Marzia Corraini, who began working with Bruno Munari in the 1970s, reedited titles which had previously been difficult to obtain, making them available not only in Italian, but also in English and French. In the English-speaking world, however, artists' books for children have been virtually ignored and, with very few exceptions, have received only

passing mention by critics.[4] In his study of artists' books, Stephen Bury cites the "children's book" as an example of the genres into which the artist's exploration of the book extended, and his list of works includes Bruno Munari's *Prelibri* and *Andy Warhol's Children's Book*, while Johanna Drucker's seminal *The Century of Artists' Books*, first published in 1995, devotes a couple of sentences to Munari and mentions Dieter Roth's *Kinderbuch* (Children's book) in very brief terms.[5] Yet artists' books constitute one of the most influential and exciting areas of crossover literature.

The picturebooks examined in this chapter challenge not only the boundaries between adult books and children's books, but the boundaries of the book itself. Many of these innovative works question the conventional codex form, which dictates standard-size pages bound in a rigid sequence. Innovative experimentation with format and design has resulted in books that are also art objects and are sometimes referred to as "object-books" or "book-objects," the latter term being preferable since they remain first and foremost books. The Italian designer Bruno Munari uses the term "libro-oggetto" (book-object) to refer to several of his groundbreaking works and the Swiss artist Warja Lavater refers to the celebrated series of *imageries* that she began publishing in the 1960s as "livres-objets" (book-objects).[6] In book-objects, the narrative is told as much by the physical form as by the text and images. For these artists, the book is not merely a container for text and images, but a concrete, three-dimensional object. They explore every facet of the book and use all the resources of bookmaking, such as typography, paper, and binding, to tell the story.[7] Munari worked as a book designer before he began creating his own children's books in the 1940s. The Japanese artist and designer Katsumi Komagata spent a number of years working as a designer in the United States in the 1980s before founding his own publishing house, One Stroke, in Tokyo in 1990, in order to bring out his unconventional books. The works of these artists constitute a provocative reflection on the very structure of the book.

Although these books are sometimes designated as "'artists' books' for children," they appeal widely to adults as well. Indeed, some adults question their status as children's books. Disconcerted by their enigmatic, interactive nature, they feel that these books are unsuitable for young readers, even when they are addressed explicitly to that audience. Limited print runs and high production costs may result in a price tag that is prohibitive for most readers of any age, making them predominantly collectors' books. Not all artists' books are expensive, however, and artists who create books with a young audience in mind are generally particularly concerned with making them accessible to a wider public. However, even reasonably priced artists' books are often sold in art galleries and museum gift shops rather than children's book stores, while libraries are reluctant to lend them if they are fortunate enough to have them in their holdings. The fragile nature of many of these works often discourages adults (parents as well as librarians) from allowing them into the hands of children. Artists' books thus often have the paradoxical status of

being children's books that are kept away from children at all costs. The new and exciting possibilities of these versatile books explain their appeal with young readers. Children enjoy the playful, interactive nature of these works, while adults admire the artist's ingenuity. Artists' books offer readers of all ages innovative and challenging books of exceptional aesthetic quality.

Early Experimentations

It is often pointed out that this art form did not really begin in earnest until the 1960s. However, a number of striking examples of artists' books for all ages were produced much earlier. At least one eighteenth-century artists' book has a crossover audience. Like most of the works by the British poet, painter, and engraver William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794) combines text and image using the technique he called illuminated printing. The introductory poem, which was first published in *Songs of Innocence* in 1789, states that all children could take pleasure in hearing the songs he had written. Over the past two centuries, children have indeed taken pleasure in Blake's poetry. Nancy Willard, who first read Blake's work at the age of seven, published the award-winning picturebook *A Visit to William Blake's Inn*, with illustrations by Alice and Martin Provensen, in 1981. The subtitle, "Poems for Innocent and Experienced Travelers," is a direct reference to the poet's work, and the author reminded me, in a letter dated March 21, 2000, that Blake wrote his happy songs "in a book that all may read," and that he also tells us that "every child may joy to hear" them. Willard's book of magical poems about life at an imaginary inn run by William Blake and staffed by dragons that "brew and bake" and angels that "wash and shake" the feather beds became the first book of poetry to win the coveted Newbery Medal. Like Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Willard's picturebook is intended for a crossover audience.[8]

At the end of the nineteenth-century and the beginning of the twentieth-century, the artists of the Vienna Secession and the Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshops) completely rethought the children's book. The Vienna Workshops were founded with the intention of uniting the fine and applied arts to create beautifully designed objects of all kinds, including books. The members experimented with format, page layout, typography, and text–image relationship. The desire to communicate to children the cultural significance of beautiful books led to cheaply produced but high quality, artistically designed publications. The special character of children's book production at the time was largely due to individual publishers, such as Verlag der Wiener Werkstätte and Martin Gerlach & Co., as well as the Viennese art schools. These works demonstrated a wide range of the techniques possible in book art, including lithography, woodcuts, stencils, and so forth. Of particular note is the Gerlachs Jugendbücherei, which became famous well beyond Austria's borders. Between 1901 and 1920, thirty-four

volumes were published in the famous series, each illustrated in colour by a different artist. *Die Nibelungen*, which was published in 1909 as volume 22, offers an excellent example of the trends of the Vienna Workshops. Carl Otto Czeschka, a prominent member of the Vienna Secession and a designer for the Vienna Workshops, is responsible for the illustrations and the design of the text, which was adapted from the ancient tale of knightly honour by Franz Keim. *Die Nibelungen* is a rather unassuming little book that gives readers no indication of the riches to be found between the rather plain covers. The sixty-seven-page book features eight double-page spreads printed in blue, red, black, and gold, as well as numerous small black-and-white vignettes, initials, and head and tail pieces. The text is written in gothic characters and all the pages, whether they contain text or illustrations, are framed by an ornamental border. This eye-catching frame highlights the small framed vignettes that are centred on a white background. An atmosphere of ritual and pageantry dominates the illustrations, which are reminiscent of the Byzantine imagery that characterizes the work of the Austrian artist Gustav Klimt. Czeschka's striking, abstract figures are solemn and ceremonial, while the decor is highly stylized. The decorative stylisation that was popular in applied arts at the time pervades the illustrations, where it is used for items as varied as wave foam, a ship's sails and figurehead, floor tiles, even horses and birds of prey. The geometric motifs and stylistic ornamentation of the bedclothes, draperies, clothing, armour, and weapons, as well as the use of the gold colour, evoke Klimt's "Golden Phase," so-named because paintings such as *Der Kuss* (The kiss, 1907–1908) contained gold leaf. *Die Nibelungen* is considered the best volume in the popular series and one of the finest examples of the Art Nouveau illustrated book.

The increasing interest of painters, sculptors, and designers in children's books at the beginning of the twentieth-century resulted in some very revolutionary picturebooks. 1919 saw the publication of one of the great forerunners of the contemporary picturebook, *Macao et Cosmage ou L'expérience du bonheur* (Macao and Cosmage or The experience of happiness), which was written and illustrated by the French painter and illustrator Edy Legrand. It was the first picturebook for children published by the Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française or NRF (the original name of the leading French publisher Gallimard), and it remains one of the most important books in the history of children's book illustration. *Macao et Cosmage* is the work of a painter at the beginning of his career; Legrand completed the book when he was only eighteen years of age. The artist would go on to become one of the most important illustrators of the twentieth-century, but his later work does not rival the brilliant daring, originality, and visual impact of *Macao et Cosmage*. Legrand's work marks a significant break from the romantic styles of illustrators such as Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac, and Kay Nielsen, who were popular in the early twentieth-century, the so-called "Golden Age of Illustration."

Macao et Cosmage contains fifty-four full-page engravings, vividly coloured by hand in the *pochoir* process. The book was revolutionary for a number of

Figure 2.1 *Die Nibelungen*, interpreted by Franz Keim, illustrated by Carl Otto Czeschka, Verlag Gerlach und Wiedling, 1909, Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY, reprinted by permission of The Museum of Modern Art.

reasons, most notably for the reversal of the conventional text–image relationship. The text is minimal (some pages are wordless) and the major role is attributed to the illustrations, which carry the narrative. In addition, the artistically handwritten text becomes a component of the image itself. Some pages consist of a single plate, while others are divided into two asymmetrical images. The page layout is further diversified by the fact that many of the images are framed by a solid, black, handpainted border, while others remain unframed. The author-illustrator experiments with typography: the placement of the text varies from page to page, and can be found within the frame, outside the frame, framed between two images, or actually framing the image itself.

Figure 2.2 *Macao et Cosmage ou L'expérience du bonheur* by Édy Legrand, La Nouvelle Revue Française, 1919.

A few of the illustrations seem to herald the graphic novel. A short foreword addressed to the child reader and signed familiarly "Your Friend, Edy-Legrand" insists on the importance of the images. Child readers are advised to look attentively because the author "only tell[s]" the story of Macao and Cosmage, whereas "the colours, the slightest objects, the smallest animals have a raison d'être" that they are intended "to discover" for themselves. *Macao et Cosmage* broke with standard publishing practices of the early twentieth-century. It is a large book with a square rather than rectangular format, which was highly unusual at the time. Unlike the carefully bound and costly books, with elegant tipped-in plates on fine paper, that were prevalent, Legrand's book had bold illustrations on course paper and it was quite inexpensive. It was an early attempt to make high quality books available to children of all economic backgrounds. While very fine copies of other prominent illustrators of the same period, such as Rackham and Dulac, are plentiful today, even a very good copy of *Macao et Cosmage* is quite rare.

It is not only the format of *Macao et Cosmage* that is innovative, but also the content. The author's highly critical attitude toward industrial and technological progress was unusual at the beginning of the twentieth-century. The anti-colonial perspective he adopts was also ahead of his time. The eponymous protagonists, a white man and a black woman, are portrayed and named on a striking doublespread that precedes the foreword and the title page. Their idyllic existence in harmony with nature is brought to an abrupt end when the uncharted paradisiacal island is discovered, and "an army of soldiers, colonists, civil servants, and scholars" arrives, bringing "blessed civilization." Eventually, Macao turns his back on the progress that was to have brought him happiness. The ending of the book seems quite bleak, especially to adult readers, but in the foreword the author offers the child addressee a glimmer of hope, saying that the story would be "sad" if he wasn't convinced that Macao and Cosmage "are happy today. . . ." The book has a very philosophical message that is encapsulated in the final line of the foreword: "The only mystery in life is penetrated when one knows where one's happiness lies." In the last unspoiled corner of the island (the image depicts two trees by a puddle-sized pond on a barren mountain), an elderly Macao finally "experiences happiness." The ultimate message is nonetheless pessimistic, as the last page of the book states: "Child! Macao was a wise man but the governor was right!" The relentless march of "civilization" and "progress" cannot be reversed. *Macao et Cosmage* played an instrumental role in establishing a new path for children's book illustration. However, because the author forbade the republication of *Macao et Cosmage* in 1947, it was not available again until 2000, when the French children's publisher Circonflexe offered a faithful reproduction targeted at ages six and up.

In the early years of the twentieth-century, there was a widespread search among avant-garde artists in many countries for innovative styles that would reflect the new age. European artists in particular sought to break down the traditional borders between non-visual art and visual art. The Russian avant-garde artist and designer El Lissitzky designed his first suprematist book, *About Two Squares*, while teaching in Vitebsk with Kazimir Malevitch. Published in Berlin in 1922, the children's book is a homage to Malevitch, whose *Black Square* initiated suprematism in 1913. The "grammar" of this art movement was based on simple geometric forms (notably the square and circle), which could communicate directly with everyone and be applied to all creative fields, including books. *About Two Squares* is at once a picturebook and a manifesto, in which Lissitzky offers a revolutionary rethinking of the children's book and the book in general, applying suprematism to the graphic arts. In "Our Book," published in 1926, he reflects on what the contemporary book should become in the new age. The traditional form of the book (jacket, spine, sequential numbered pages) must assume a new shape capable of expressing the times. In the young Soviet Union of 1926, he wrote: "The book is becoming the most monumental work of art. . . . By reading, our children are already acquiring a