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**(Dis)Entangling the Narrator's and the
Adult Reader's Voices:
Rosie's Walk and Shhh!
vs.
*The Nursery Alice***

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Although children's literature is written, published and bought for children, it is often said to address adults at least as much as children. Zohar Shavit, in "The Double Attribution of Texts for Children and How It Affects Writing for Children", reminds us that Philippe Ariès and others have contended that this is a modern idea, for "children were not considered to have had needs that were any different from the needs of adults" till the seventeenth century (Shavit 2012, 84). It was not until the eighteenth, and even more clearly, the nineteenth century, that children's literature became "a prominent field within the publishing establishment" (85), and, as Shavit argues, adults have increasingly involved themselves in children's culture ever since (83), so much so that "more and more texts nowadays are less interested in appealing to the child, and indeed seem to forget that the child is, after all, their official addressee" (95). Nodelman, in *The Hidden Adult* (2008), does not share Shavit's view that modern children's literature tends to address the adult reader more than the child reader. Children's literature, according to Nodelman (2008, 341), "always tries above all else to be nonadult", but

“always, inevitably, fails”, resulting in the creation of what he calls complex “shadow texts”¹.

Children’s books are accordingly said to have two types of implied readers: child readers and adult readers, whose behaviors are thought to diverge considerably, child readers being less experienced than adult readers. This article will analyze the role of the adult reader who reads picturebooks aloud to the child reader, or rather, to the prereader, that is the child under five. The role of such an adult reader is complex. If, to quote Nodelman (2008, 210), “the narrator most characteristically implied in texts of children’s literature is someone much like the actual author: an adult, and more specifically, an adult speaking to children”, conversely, the adult reader, who actually speaks to a child or to a group of children, is much like the implied narrator of children’s books. Furthermore, as Cochran-Smith (1985, 84) has pointed out, in storyreading sessions, the adult reader sometimes acts as a “spokesperson for the text”. To put it differently, the adult reader can be said to be, in part, the narrator’s double. However, the adult reader’s role is not limited to reading the words written on the page aloud. To use Jean-Jacques Lecercle’s terms in *Interpretation as Pragmatics* (1999), the adult reader is also captured at a specific place by the ALTER structure² implied by young children’s books, and this ALTER structure plans a specific reader, or rather two specific readers, as already stated. Moreover, the adult reader cannot stay insensitive to a child’s reactions when reading the book aloud: the adult reader sometimes supersedes the narrator, and becomes a “secondary narrator or commentator on the text” (Cochran-Smith 1985, 84). In other words, it seems that the adult reader cannot but depart from the narrator’s voice, the adult reader’s voice being a copy of as well as a reaction to the narrator’s voice and to the children’s reactions.

This article will provide a close analysis of three young children’s books, *The Nursery Alice* (Carroll 1890), *Rosie’s Walk* (Hutchins 1968) and *Shhh!* (Grindley & Utton 1991). Though the publication dates of

¹ Nodelman does not mean here that children’s books only have complex shadow texts: as he puts it, “[w]hile fictional texts for adult audiences often have shadow texts more complex than the texts are themselves, there’s rarely such an obvious disjunction between their texts and their shadow texts” (2008, 14).

² Lecercle (1999, 88) forges the concept of the ALTER structure in order to show the different forces at work in the language game of interpretation (which is but a variant of the language game of interpellation): while the Reader is interpellated by the Text as mediated by Language and the Encyclopedia, s/he can in turn capture the Author at a specific place, via the Text, the Encyclopedia and Language.

these young children's books span a little more than one hundred years, all came out at a time when the belief that children's needs had to be taken into account was widely shared and when children's literature was no longer thought to have to be systematically didactic. As Knowles and Malmkjær (1996, 18) put it, Carroll's *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* has often been described as a turning-point in children's literature, because its tone is deemed to radically differ from the moralizing tone of its predecessors, thereby offering "hours of pleasure" to its young readers. *The Nursery Alice*, being Carroll's rewriting of this groundbreaking children's book for young children, as well as one of the very first young children's books ever published, seems an adequate starting point to investigate the question of the relationship between the narrator's and the adult reader's voice. As Sundmark (1999, 129-131) has perceptively noticed, it largely relies on an omnipresent narratorial voice and, according to Susina (2010, 87), the text is "a possible model for how an adult reader might present the text to a child". *Rosie's Walk* may, at first glance, seem an odd choice, since the narratorial voice is extremely neutral there. Yet, the contrapuntal aesthetics of this picturebook—the first ever published to rely on such a technique (Nikolajeva & Scott 2000)—suggest a greater authorial intervention than first imagined, and therefore effectively raises the question of the adult reader's role when reading such an elaborate picturebook to a young child. *Shhh!*, one of the first lift-the-flap books ever published³, combines some of the characteristics displayed in *The Nursery Alice* and in *Rosie's Walk*: its narrator is extremely present and its sophisticated aesthetics imply complex authorial interventions, which may prevent the adult reader from being fully able to become what Cochran-Smith calls "a secondary narrator". Examining these three young children's books will, then, enable me to show that, though the narrator's and the adult reader's voices cannot, in theory, be identical, and though some young children's books do invite their adult readers to deviate from the text when reading it aloud, others, which apparently openly encourage considerable reader participation (and dialogic interaction), ultimately try

³ The first modern lift-the-flap book published was Eric Hill's *Where's Spot?* (1980). Although innovative at the time, this book has been shown to be flawed, in particular by Smith (2001, 230) who sees "a sloppiness in the language in *Where's Spot?* that leaves the reader unsatisfied" and regrets "the relentless linearity of the plot and the unimaginative use of flaps". *Shhh!*, she argues, is the first modern lift-the-flap book which truly exploits the possibilities offered by the medium.

to block any reader's intervention, thus leading to a confluence of the narrator's and the adult reader's voices.

Even if *The Nursery Alice* is 56 pages long in the 2010 Macmillan edition, Lewis Carroll made it clear in his preface that this new illustrated version of Alice's adventures was meant for young children, and Carroll proved to be aware that young children cannot be expected to be read a book this length:

And my ambition *now* is [...] to be read by Children aged from Nought to Five. To be read? Nay, not so! Say rather to be thumbed, to be cooed over, to be dogs'-eared, to be rumped, to be kissed, by the illiterate, ungrammatical, dimpled Darlings, that fill your Nursery with merry uproar. (58-59)

The epanorthosis suggests Carroll knew that children were potentially disruptive forces, paying more attention to the materiality of the book than to its contents. However, I would like to argue that *The Nursery Alice* neither embraces the idea of an active prereader, nor encourages the adult reader to make his/her own voice diverge from the narrator's voice to better constrain the prereader. *The Nursery Alice* is an example of a young children's book that resorts to several linguistic and pragmatic strategies intended to block the adult reader's as well as the child reader's reactions.

While, as Bettelheim (1976, 150) puts it in *The Uses of Enchantment*, "[telling] permits greater flexibility", *The Nursery Alice* does not allow the adult reader much room for improvisation. As one anonymous reviewer put it when the book came out in 1890,

we suspect that *The Nursery 'Alice'* will be read aloud by the hour by the complaisant nurse, glad to find that her usual task of reviving and stimulating a wandering attention is anticipated by *the superabundant comments* which Mr. Carroll thinks fit to interpolate freely. (quoted in Cohen 1983-1984, 125, my italics)

Whether the adult reader is glad or not of the narrator's multifarious interventions is open to discussion, but the fact remains that the narrator is very much present. S/he repeatedly invites the child to have a look at the colors of the illustrations (which Lewis Carroll was very proud of, as Jan Susina reminds us 2010, 89). For instance, the narrator (seemingly, as the lack of interrogation mark at the end of the sentence reveals) encourages the reader to admire the White Rabbit's attire, which is described at length in the very first chapter of *The Nursery Alice*:

Hasn't it got pretty pink eyes [...]; and pink ears; and a nice brown coat; and you can just see its red pocket-handkerchief peeping out of its coat-pocket: and, what with its blue neck-tie and its yellow waistcoat, it really is very nicely dressed. (Carroll, 2)

Although the White Rabbit's coat, handkerchief, neck-tie and waistcoat play no role whatsoever in the story, the narrator points to each of these elements one after the other. Moreover, the narrator points to details of the illustrations that are not mentioned in the diegesis, and could accordingly be easily overlooked by the narrator—but spontaneously commented upon by any adult reader when reading the book aloud to a young child. To give only two examples, the narrator counts the number of cups on the table in chapter X, "The Mad Tea-Party", and identifies the nature of all the members of the jury in chapter XIII, "Who Stole the Tarts?":

[T]here were quantities of tea-cups set all along it [the table]. You ca'n't see all the table, you know, and even in the bit you *can* see there are nine cups, counting the one the March Hare has got in his hand. (37)

Let's try if we can make out all the twelve. [...] I see the Frog, and the Dormouse, and the Rat and the Ferret, and the Hedgehog, and the Lizard, and the Bantam-Cock, and the Mole, and the Duck, and the Squirrel, and a screaming bird, with a long beak, just behind the Mole.

But that only makes eleven: we must find one more creature.

Oh, do you see a little white head, coming out behind the Mole, and just under the Duck's beak? That makes up the twelve. (52-53)

While counting the number of tea-cups on the table could be construed as a way to elaborate on the co-text in the left-hand side ("there were quantities of tea-cups"), and thus perceived to be somehow connected to the narrative, it is much harder to justify the narrator's determination to label each and every animal—this digressive comment being much more likely to be uttered by an adult reader trying to test or reinforce a child's knowledge of animals. Finally, the narrator repeatedly asks the reader to give his/her opinion about the situation Alice or other Wonderland characters find themselves in, as in chapter II, "How Alice Grew Tall" when the narrator asks: "Which would *you* have liked the best, do you think, to be a little tiny Alice, no larger than a kitten, or a great tall Alice, with your head always knocking against the ceiling?" (8) or in chapter XIV, "The Shower of Cards" when the narrator asks: "Would *you* like to be punished for something you hadn't done?" (54). These examples

prove that Carroll's intention when adapting *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was to determine very precisely the role of the adult reader and prevent any divergence from the narrator's voice.

Nonetheless, the abundance of questions directed at the prereader could suggest that the child is invited to actively respond to the book—all the more so since the narrator invites the reader to “shake the book a little, from side to side” (2-3) to make the White Rabbit tremble in the very first chapter. If such is really the case, it could mean that the adult reader, trying to act as the spokesperson for the text, would have to adapt it to limit the child's reactions. Yet, as I have shown elsewhere (Iché 2015, 198-199), the narrator predominantly resorts to conducive yes-no questions, which “favor[...] one possible answer (*yes* or *no*) over the other”, as Bolinger's definition of conducive questions has it (see Hudson 1975, 13). For instance, when the narrator asks: “Would you like to hear what it was that she dreamed about?” (1), the co-text in the left-hand side, “she had a very curious dream”, encourages the reader to say “Yes!” or at least nod. The narrator arouses the child's curiosity with the help of the adverb “very”, before asking whether s/he wants to know what the dream is about. It is, then, extremely unlikely that the child will answer: “No!” Secondly, whenever the narrator asks *wh*- questions, which are supposed to be open questions, s/he actually controls the answer. For instance, at the beginning of chapter III, “The Pool of Tears”, after explaining that the huge Alice is now able to grab the golden key and open the tiny door with it, the narrator asks: “what good was it to get the door open, when she couldn't get *through*?” (9). The question includes an argument against any positive answer: the only possible (and therefore useless) answer is “it was no good.” Thirdly, the narrator asks *interro-negative* questions, which, as Green (2008, 161-162) underlines, can be “used to pressure the addressee into admitting or agreeing to a proposition that the speaker is putting forth” and, as Heritage (2002, 1433) has further shown, are recurrently treated as if the speaker were taking a stand. The narrator therefore produces clauses that are syntactically interrogations, but pragmatically assertions, such as “Wasn't it a pity she had locked up the door again?” (7) or “Wasn't that a funny way of selling hats?” (40). Fourthly, the narrator quasi-systematically ignores the Transition Relevance Places (TRP) identified by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), in order to make sure that the child cannot take his/her turn in the conversation between the adult reader and himself/herself. According to their findings, in a conversation, if the speaker has selected the next speaker, then s/he “has

the right and is obliged to take next turn to speak” at the proper TRP (Sacks et al. 1974, 704). For instance, in the following passage taken from chapter XIII:

And then—
And then what *do* you think happened? Why, her skirt caught against the Jury-box, and tipped it over, and all the poor little Jurors came tumbling out of it! (Carroll, 51)

The narrator clearly selects the next speaker, since s/he directly addresses the child with the shifter “you”. Yet, there is no pause, no new line, no new paragraph after the question to let the child take his/her turn. The narrator creates an artificial pause before asking his/her question, at a place which cannot be interpreted as a TRP (after “And then—”), but refuses to let the selected speaker take his/her turn at the real TRP, at the end of the question. Finally, the narrator goes so far as to insert words the child is imagined to have pronounced. Here is an example from the beginning of chapter XIII:

Did you ever hear how the Queen of Hearts made some tarts? And can you tell me what became of them?
“Why, of *course* I can! Doesn’t the song tell all about it?
*The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts:
All on a summer day:
The Knave of Hearts, he stole those tarts,
And took them quite away!*” (49)

The narrator pretends to make the flesh-and-blood child enter the fictional narration of Alice’s story, while it is only the narratee who intervenes here. This strategy ultimately aims at preventing the real child from speaking for himself/herself. As Susina (2010, 92) has noted, “[r]ather than being a series of competing voices, this *Alice* is dominated by the voice of the narrator”. Since Carroll included many potential digressions usually made spontaneously by adult readers, and since the prereader’s participation is restricted by the narrator, the adult reader’s voice does not and cannot really diverge from the narrator’s. The adult reader’s voice is only a small tributary of *The Nursery Alice* River, not meant to influence its flow.

As I have already mentioned, the narratorial voice in *Rosie’s Walk* is markedly dissimilar to the narratorial voice in *The Nursery Alice*. The narrator tells the story in the following fashion: “Rosie the hen went for a walk across the yard, around the pond, over the haystack, past the mill,

through the fence, under the beehives and got back in time for dinner". Composed of two coordinated declarative clauses, this sentence does not particularly invite its recipient to respond. There is no blank, no "already said" or "unsaid," as Eco (1985, 27) puts it, that the reader could make reappear. As is conveyed by the repeated use of the definite article (Givón 1993, 232), the narrator assumes that the reader has immediate access to the referents of "yard", "pond", "haystack", "mill", "fence", and "beehives" (and rightly so, as all these elements are indeed present in Hutchins's illustrations) and that s/he will accordingly not have any trouble identifying them. The prereader, therefore, is discouraged from asking any question to clarify the situation. Moreover, the narrator does not address the young child, or ask him/her a question, so that the adult reader does not have to become "the spokesperson for the text" (Cochran-Smith 1985, 84) and adapt it: his/her role seems to be limited to decoding the words on the page, as in *The Nursery Alice*.

Yet, *Rosie's Walk* is much more than its 32-word sentence. This picturebook features what Nikolajeva and Scott have called "a *counterpointing* dynamic" (2000, 226), since "words and images collaborate to communicate meanings beyond the scope of either one alone". Indeed, Hutchins's illustrations show much more than a hen going out for a walk. As is made explicit by the blurb on the back cover, *Rosie's Walk* is actually as much about a "sly fox" ready to pounce on the delightfully oblivious hen as it is about Rosie. According to Mourão (2012, 80), children usually do not respond much to the text, but are "far more interested in the entertaining antics of the fox". To my knowledge, no full-fledged reception study has been carried out with adult readers, but Nodelman (1988, 224) explains that students in children's literature courses often feel that the picturebook could do entirely without the words, before showing how the ironic comment the pictures make on the words renders *Rosie's Walk* particularly worthy of interest: "They [the pictures] make the words comic by making them outrageously incomplete, only a half-truth, and by making their incompleteness so obvious" (224). Even if the words do not feature any blanks, the picturebook relies on a considerable gap between the text and the pictures, that the reader is invited to react to. While the words "Rosie the hen went for a walk" appear in the first double spread, the reader can already see the fox, with its tongue sticking out of its mouth, hiding under the coop. Then, although the second double spread only features the words "across the yard", the reader can see the fox leaping, and is probably relieved (albeit maybe sorry as well) when s/he sees the rake (that was lying on the ground in

the previous double spread) hitting the fox in the face in the next double spread. If the imaginative space that lies between the words and the pictures is often described as the central characteristic of picturebooks (Styles & Watson 1996, 2), it could be argued that it is even more the case here, considering the discrepancy between the text and the illustrations.

Besides, the book layout exploits the turn-paging event in order to encourage responses: each adjunct is written on a recto page, at which point the adult reader has to pause for a second in order to turn the page or have the child do it. The next double spread features no word at all, thus allowing for extensive reactions. The adult reader, who is not just the “spokesperson for the text” but who is also captured at a specific place by the ALTER structure of the book, cannot, then, merely read the words on the page aloud. The picturebook calls on the adult reader to insert his/her reactions to these repeated gaps between the words and the illustrations, all the more so since prereaders will most likely react to them. Prereaders may only point at the fox, giggle and say nothing, as documented by Nodelman (1988, 224), or ask questions about the fox’s bumbled attempts to catch Rosie, as Mourão has suggested (2012, 80). However, each reaction—whether verbal or non-verbal—calls for extensive adult participation, and thus substantial divergence from the words on the page. The adult reader may, indeed, ask mock-questions such as “But why are you laughing?” or make playful comments such as “There is really nothing to laugh about”, or encourage more verbal child-participation and ask questions such as “What do you think is going to happen now?” or “Do you think the fox is going to catch Rosie this time?”. Despite an apparent lack of intervention-enhancing strategies, *Rosie’s Walk* actually invites its adult reader to disentangle his/her voice from the voice of the narrator, and to become what Cochran-Smith (1985, 84) calls a “secondary narrator”.

Shhh!, I would argue, also requires an active adult reader, who can do more than just read the words printed on the page out loud. However, this picturebook resorts to strategies that are very different from those of *Rosie’s Walk*, and that are sometimes more similar to those displayed in *The Nursery Alice*. *Shhh!* is a lift-the-flap book, which invites the reader to enter a giant’s castle, but to do so gingerly so as not to wake up the giant. *Shhh!* encourages the prereader to lift the flaps, turn the pages but also answer questions. Indeed, the narrator addresses the reader directly on a regular basis, as can be seen in the following examples: “Do you think

she saw us?” or “Do you think we woke him up?” Such direct questions require answers from the reader, who cannot remain silent, or at least who can hardly avoid nodding or shaking his/her head. However, just as in *The Nursery Alice*, the potential answers to these questions are very limited. As polar questions, their answer is intrinsically limited to yes or no. Furthermore, the co-text in the right-hand side shows that it does not really matter whether the reader answers “yes” or “no”, or whether the answer is verbal or non verbal. After asking “Do you think she saw us?”, the narrator invites the reader to “Look through the door and see if she’s still cooking dinner”; after asking “Do you think we woke him up?”, the reader is asked to “Peek through the hatch and see if he’s still asleep”. In other words, the reader is invited to guess and determine whether s/he is right by lifting the flap. While encouraging the reader to voice an answer (or think about an answer), the narrator constrains his/her reactions and gestures.

Consequently, it is no wonder that the picturebook is scattered with imperative forms, such as “Come inside”, “Turn over quickly now”, and “Be quiet again now”. The injunction to silence is voiced three times in the course of *Shhh!*, which is obviously no coincidence given the title of the picturebook. The interjection itself is repeated eight times (including the title), and printed in capital letters five times—suggesting that the order to remain silent is ironically given loudly. The narrator thus tries to restrict the reader’s participation, in order to prevent the reader from being too noisy and disturbing the people and animals living in the castle. At the same time though, s/he needs the reader to giggle or ask questions or excitedly lift the flaps on the pages for the next “SHHH!” or “Be quiet again now” to be relevant. The narrator’s loud injunctions to silence are meant to trigger alarm and excitement at the same time. The adult reader has to take up the challenge, read between the lines and interpret the use of the capital letters for “SHHH!”, but also for “I think I heard a MIAOW” and “Isn’t he UGLY?” at the end of the book. These capital letters function as stage directions, indicating to the adult reader how these passages should be read.

In this respect, the narrator’s and adult reader’s voices overlap more in *Shhh!* than in *Rosie’s Walk*. However, the adult reader will probably have to directly intervene to, as the author’s website states, “encourage a bit of noise from [the] audience” (website). For instance, the adult reader could giggle at the fat mouse, or even more drastically, convince his/her listeners to say “Boo!” when looking at the giant sleeping in his bed at the

end of the book. The first-person narrator already says “I dare you to say ‘Boo!’”, but, as is made clear on Sally Grindley’s website, young children “might be a bit hesitant about saying Boo to the giant”. The following recommendation is then issued: “tell them to be brave—and then as you hurry to turn the page before the giant can catch you, scold them saying you didn’t mean it!”.

The adult reader will probably exploit the discrepancy between the words and the pictures to trigger the reactions planned by the narrative structure, even though there is no “perspectival counterpoint” here between the text and the illustrations (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2000, 233), but what the authors call “significant enhancement” (Nikolajeva & Scott, 230)—that is to say that the pictures are complementary to the text and provide additional information. The adult reader could then point out the mouse and ask the child to have a look at its huge belly, and wait for comments or more directly ask why the mouse’s belly is so big. Other elements are also worth drawing attention to, as they could belong or have belonged to previous visitors of the giant’s castle: the bones on the floor of the giant’s dining room, the hands gripping the edge of the teacup or the eyes in the soup. Pointing to these visual details will both make the child noisier (as s/he will probably express her mock or real concern for the previous visitors) and quieter (as s/he will do her best not to meet the same fate). *Shhh!* constructs a more constrained implied reader than *Rosie’s Walk*, who is actually not unlike the implied reader constructed by *The Nursery Alice*, as s/he is required to play a very specific role, which includes answering yes-no questions, lifting the flaps only when asked to do so (even though real children may lift the flaps before it is time for them to do so), being quiet when required, but noisy at times as well, etc. The adult reader’s role constructed by *Shhh!*, however, is different from the adult reader’s role constructed by *The Nursery Alice*: when reading the picturebook aloud to the prereader, the adult reader is not as constrained as the prereader, paradoxically because in trying to be the spokesperson for the text, s/he takes on the role of a secondary narrator. Since one of the adult reader’s missions is to make sure the prereader acts as required, s/he will then comment on the pictures and adapt the tone of his/her voice and his/her exhortations to silence to the reactions of the child prereader.

The adult reader’s assistance is required for the prereader to fully experience young children’s books: s/he will give the prereader access to

the text, become the narrator's double, or, to use Cochran-Smith's words, become "the spokesperson for the text" (1985, 84). Often, s/he will be more than just a spokesperson and become a "secondary narrator or commentator on the text" (84), which is most clearly the case with *Rosie's Walk*. Notwithstanding its seeming absence of response-inviting strategies, Hutchins's picturebook indeed truly encourages its adult reader to take advantage of the pauses created by the author's clever exploitation of the book layout for him/her to comment or have the child reader comment on the hilarious discrepancy between the text and the pictures, therefore allowing the adult reader to disentangle his/her voice from the voice of the narrator. Though the narrator's and the adult reader's voices will overlap much more in *Shhh!*, the adult reader of *Shhh!* has to make sure that the prereader constructed by the picturebook reacts as planned and probably has to encourage the child to be noisier than s/he would be if the adult reader read the book out loud without making any comments. As in *Rosie's Walk*, the adult reader will then manage to take on the role of a "secondary narrator" and assert his/her own voice.

However, not all young children's books seem to embrace the idea of the adult reader's actively taking on the role of a "secondary narrator." Although *The Nursery Alice* regularly addresses the reader and seems, at first glance, to be response-inviting, the adult reader's participation is restricted—s/he is only allowed to be the narrator's double, the "spokesperson for the text". The flesh-and-blood adult reader of *The Nursery Alice* may well be annoyed at the narrator's authoritative voice, but will have a hard time disentangling his/her voice from the narrator's: not only is every (or almost) potential digression planned in advance, but the narrator also "secure[s] the child who is outside the book" (Rose 1994, 2), which Rose argues is what every children's book sets out to do. *The Nursery Alice* reveals then that there is no such thing as a clean break from a long-standing tradition: despite its kinship with the 1865 version, which many critics have argued to be non-didactic, this illustrated book proves not to let the reader challenge the traditional passive role children's books used to assign to their readers. More astonishing, perhaps, is the fact that *Shhh!*, which came out in 1991 and otherwise ingeniously exploits the lift-the-flap feature, reluctantly encourages its prereader to fully become an active reader, and only grants the adult reader the opportunity to develop his/her own voice to better constrain the young child. If more than one hundred years separate the publication of *The Nursery Alice* from that of *Shhh!*, the question of the adult reader's and the young child's agency

turns out to be as topical now as it was then—books fostering active readers, such as *Rosie's Walk*, being maybe more the exception than the new rule.

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