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From Metaphorical to Literal Door-Openings in Children's Literature... and Back

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1. Introduction

1.1. Multicultural children's books as potential metaphorical windows, mirrors and doors

Children's literature is often believed to open doors for their readers, in other words to potentially broaden their horizons. As Bishop has famously argued, children's books have a key-role to play in terms of multicultural literacy notably, whether they constitute metaphorical "windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange", or even "sliding glass doors" that readers "have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author" (1990: IX). For Bishop, all children would benefit from reading children's books that are windows and/or sliding glass doors. Socially privileged children need books "that will help them understand the multicultural nature of the world they live in, and their place as a member of just one group, as well as their connections to all other humans", so that they do not grow up with "an exaggerated sense of their own importance and value in the world" (1990: X). Underprivileged children, among which nonwhite children, need books that are not only windows, but windows that are also mirrors—which, Bishop argues, happens "when lighting conditions are just right" (1990: IX)—for them to see themselves not distorted but "reflected in the books they read" (1990: X). While Bishop is aware that "literature, no matter how powerful, has its limits" (1990: XI), she calls for children's books that can act as mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors to "celebrate both our differences and our similarities" (1990: xi).

Bishop's 1990 call for inclusive children's literature expanding its readers' horizons is still intensely topical. Miller's 2012–2013 article entitled "Literature Opens Doors for All Children" focuses on children's literature and Young Adult (YA) literature about disability and advocates engagement with these issues in order to "develop awareness and empathy" (2012/2013: 28), to empower differently abled youths but also to "increase engagement and foster reading pleasure" (2012/2013: 29). Naidoo and Dahlen's collected volume *Diversity in Youth Literature* similarly reckons that reading can pave the way for cultural competence (their book being aptly subtitled "Opening Doors through Reading") and invites librarians and educators to select and discuss children's books and YA books by and about people of different cultures, countries, genders, sexual orientations, abilities etc. (2013: 18). While many scholars regret that the majority of characters in picturebooks are still white, preventing some readers from "connecting" to characters (Johnson, Koss & Martinez, 2018: 572), and deplore both underrepresentation ("missing mirrors and windows as well as closed doors" [Botelho, 2021: 121]) and misrepresentation ("broken mirrors and windows" [Botelho, 2021: 121]), Enriquez provides strategies so that educators try and avoid limiting themselves to "Foggy Mirrors, Tiny Windows, and Heavy Doors", such as "includ[ing] students in the process of diversifying the classroom library", "supplement[ing] and/or replac[ing] our core unit books", or "rethink[ing] the perspectives and positions we privilege through texts" (2021: 104–106).

Reclaiming the metaphors of windows, mirrors and doors further enables scholars to link readers' perceptions and actions. While it is necessary to select, discuss and engage with children's books whose mirroring qualities adequately reflect the diversity of their readers, books serving as sliding glass doors, or simply doors, can "create opportunities for re-imagining power relations and organizing for collective action" (Botelho & Rudman, 2009: 128). Johnson, Koss and Martinez agree with Botelho and Rudman's contention that "doors invite action" (2018: 265) and champion books serving as sliding glass doors, which they redefine, after Bishop, as having the power to change readers (2018: 573) and invite them to take action (2018: 574). Thus, children's literature can potentially become "a conduit—a door—to engage children in social practices that function for social justice"

(Botelho & Rudman, 2009: 1), and its ultimate purpose may be to “empower the reader” (Johnson, Koss & Martinez, 2018) and “reconstruct power” (Botelho, 2021: 123).

1.2. What grounding for these conceptual metaphors in children’s literature?

As made clear by Botelho and Rudman (2009: 265), children’s literature studies profusely resort to the metaphor of doors to emphasize the crucial role of books for children, or at least some of them. This is no surprise as metaphors have been shown not to merely adorn our language, but to structure our “ordinary conceptual system” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 3), that is to say that concepts are frequently “partially structured, understood, performed and talked about” in terms of other concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 5). The metaphor BOOKS (including CHILDREN’S BOOKS) ARE DOORS¹ derives, in all likelihood, from the underlying conceptual metaphor READING IS A JOURNEY (Stockwell, 2009: 81; Manguel, 2013; Shaw, Armstrong, Alejandro, Martin-Young & Weyan, 2021: 9), that is itself a variation on the well-known LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor (Dannenberg, 2008: 67; Stockwell, 2009: 81).

This common conceptual metaphor—common at least in Western countries—may explain why the motif of doors is prevalent in children’s and YA literature. To limit ourselves to doors proper, and therefore to exclude passageways which may be said nonetheless to have a “family resemblance”, in Wittgenstein’s sense, with doors, and to limit ourselves to extremely well-known doors in the field of English-language children’s literature, one can think of Alice’s opening the fifteen-inch-high door leading to “the loveliest garden” in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*; Mary Lennox’s own unlocking of the door to the “secret garden” in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*; Lucy Pevensie’s opening a wardrobe door to enter the magical world of Narnia in C. S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; or Coraline’s unlocking the door to the Other World in Neil Gaiman’s *Coraline*.

But conceptual metaphors are also, as Lakoff and Johnson posit, “grounded in systematic correlations within our experience” (1980: 61). They help speakers conceptualize a concept in terms of another concept that they understand more readily because it is physically embodied. In that sense, the metaphor BOOKS ARE DOORS (or BOOKS ARE WINDOWS for that matter) is, no doubt, widespread because of the perceived correlation between the type of movement involved when we open doors and the one involved in the turning of the page. Some books, and I would contend young children’s books in particular, tend to superimpose the page-turning mechanism and the door-opening gesture—thereby equating turning pages and crossing thresholds. Alice’s crossing the sliding-door-like mirror in Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass* can be seen as a very ingenious example of this device. The two illustrations of each side of the looking-glass are placed on the same leaf—one illustration of one side of the mirror on the recto side of the page (page 11) and the other illustration of the other side of the mirror on the verso side of the page (page 12), the leaf becoming, as Hancher puts it (1985: 130), in effect the glass—or the glass door. The reader turning the page “is propelled through his or her own action into Carroll’s nonsense world” (Wong, 2009: 143–144) and is empowered by the exploitation of the page-turning event (Iché, 2016b).

1.3. Contemporary young children’s picturebooks with literal door-openings

The entanglement of metaphorical and literal doors is, I would argue, a salient feature of contemporary young children’s picturebooks, which give pride of place to literal door-openings that end up opening large metaphorical doors, and thus large horizons, for their child readers. The children’s books selected for this study are commercially successful contemporary picturebooks, including but not limited to picturebooks with tactile features such as flaps, pull-tabs and pop-ups, written in English, authored and/ or illustrated by critically-acclaimed authors and illustrators, which all require their characters and/or readers to literally open doors.² The selection includes *Haunted House* (1979) by author and illustrator Jan Pieńkowski, assistant illustrator Jane Walmsley and paper engineer Tor Lokvig; *Knock Knock Who’s There?* (1985) by author Sally Grindley and illustrator Anthony Browne; *Shhh!* (1991) by author Sally Grindley and illustrator Peter Utton; *Postman Bear*

(2000) by author Julia Donaldson and illustrator Axel Scheffler; *Doors* (2004) by author and illustrator Roxie Munro; and *What's Next Door?* (2017) by author and illustrator Nicola O'Byrne.

I examine the various strategies implemented by these authors, illustrators, book designers and paper engineers to get readers to open paper doors—by focusing both on the book-as-object and on the book-as-discourse. I argue that door-openings in children's literature help child readers achieve two main goals: (1) invest the page-turning event, which has not yet completely become invisible in young child readers, with pleasure and meaning; and (2) actively engage with the fictive world they are reading about, since, as Botelho and Rudman put it, "doors invite action" (2009: 265).

2. Mastering the delicate art of opening paper doors

All books have a material and an immaterial component; all books can be analyzed as both objects and discourse. Young children's books, however, and, perhaps even more so, contemporary young children's books, tend to emphasize this dual material-immaterial quality.

2.1. Picturebooks as objects

Pictures form an essential part of picturebooks, as the compound testifies, so much so that many scholars in children's literature studies have relinquished the appellation "picture book" in two words in favor of "picturebook" in one word. Yet, there is more to the success of picturebooks than what stems from what Bader calls "the interdependence of pictures and words" (1976: 1). Of equal importance, Bader posits (1976: 1), are "the simultaneous display of two facing pages" and "the drama of the turning of the page".

As Dowd Lambert explains (2018: 28), children's authors do not only think about the story they want to tell, but also about the material presentation for the story. The page layout in picturebooks, in particular, can be exploited on several levels: single- or doublespreads can be chosen to compress or expand time or to materialize the separation between characters; air frames (the white space around pictures) can be diminished or drawn upon to try to blur "the perceptual line between the reader's reality and the world of the book" (Dowd Lambert, 2018: 29–32).

Picturebooks for young children are additionally designed not merely to be looked at, but to be truly handled—and it can be argued that many of them are made of cardboard to facilitate the intervention of young readers in the page-turning process. Nodelman is obviously right when he posits that "most books for babies are printed on cloth or on thick cardboard" (1988: 22) to avoid chewing or ripping apart, because the intended audience has not yet acquired the knowledge that books are "meant to be looked at" (1988: 22), but this assertion overlooks the importance of the very material handling of picturebooks. Furthermore, although Nodelman does emphasize that children have to acquire some specific skills in the handling of a picturebook, such as holding it in a certain direction (up/down) and in a certain way (front/back) (1988: 22), he does not insist on the page-turning event itself.

While Nikolajeva and Scott focus on what they call pageturners, which they define as "a detail, visual or verbal, that encourages the viewer to turn the page and find out what happens next" (2001: 152), they do not address what actually happens to child readers as they make the very physical gesture of turning the page, or as they see the adult storyteller turn the page. As Mackey puts it,

[...] the page-turning requirement of a picture book contributes a great deal to the overall impact of the text. [...] Furthermore, *the page turn takes time, builds in obligatory pauses in the reading*. Its contribution to the rhythm and pacing of a text is enormous. No amount of punctuating and paragraphing can be as absolute as the built-in break (brake?) of a page turn. (1998: 10–11, my emphasis)

Though the page-turning event has become invisible for many adult readers, the gesture itself and the subsequent event is far from invisible to child readers. It can be tricky for young children to actually turn the page; they sometimes inadvertently turn several pages at a time or almost tear the leaf apart if the book is not

printed on cardboard. Page-turning itself becomes a “dramatic” event in the handling of the book, and not just the reading of the book. A page break may not be a mere “rift in the narrative” (Bartow, 2016: 359) but a rift in the book-handling experience.

2.2. Helping children become competent *liseurs*

In *La Lecture comme Jeu*, Picard defends the idea that each adult or competent reader is composed of three elements: the “liseur”, the physical person who maintains liminal contact with the external world, the “lu”, who is absorbed in the fictional world and surrenders to his or her emotions when reading, and the “lectant”, who engages with the text more critically (1986: 214). It is only when the *liseur*, the *lu* and the *lectant* are all fully functioning that a reader can truly enjoy his or her reading experience, which, for Picard, becomes akin to a game.³

In the case of very young readers, the reading experience can be impeded by the page-turning process. Young children who are not already competent *liseurs* are not skilled enough in the art of turning the pages or their witnessing the page-turning event is so exceptional and unfamiliar that it becomes the only center of attention. A *liseur* is, in effect, aware of the external world, which includes the materiality of the book, but this awareness of the external world is not so preponderant that it prevents the reader from becoming immersed in the fictional world, thus allowing the *lu* to emerge, or from engaging in a critical discussion about the text, and thus allowing the *lectant* to emerge.

Some picturebooks for young readers address this very question of turning young children into competent *liseurs*, by resorting to specific devices to help them master the art of turning pages. In particular, the picturebooks discussed in this article equate the act of turning the page, which can still be difficult for young or very young children, and the act of opening doors, which is a familiar feature of their day-to-day life— thereby helping young children become experts at page-turning and find pleasure in it. Two visual strategies are implemented to reach this goal: the superimposition of doors and pages and the use of door-like flaps.

The door/page equation is exploited in four out of the six picturebooks of the corpus. *Knock Knock Who's There?* relies on a repetitive pattern that superimposes doors and pages throughout the picturebook. The reader is indeed invited to wonder, along with the child character in his or her bed on the left spread, who is knocking on the door that can be seen on the right corresponding spread. The door does not exactly cover the whole page, since the doorframe, a small part of the wallpaper and a small part of

the carpet can be seen on the right spread, but the lack of an air frame around the picture gives the impression that the page is, in effect, a door. Every two pages, the child (and the reader) hear someone knocking on the half-open door, ask “Who’s there?” and have to turn the page / open the door to find out who the creature behind the door is (a scary gorilla, a wicked witch, a creepy ghost, a fierce dragon, a tall giant— or actually the child’s cuddly father).

Pieńkowski’s *Haunted House*, Munro’s *Doors* and Grindley’s *Shhh!* superimpose their front covers (or one of the pages at the very beginning of the book in the case of *Shhh!*) and doors. The reader of *Haunted House* has to bravely open the book/open the front door to enter the eponymous haunted house. The front cover of Munro’s *Doors* likewise represents a door, which a child opens for and/or with the reader. The front page of *Shhh!* does not represent a door, but a castle; after opening the book, the reader “walks” towards the castle and unfolds the left spread of the third page to open the door and “enter the giant’s castle”.

While *What’s Next Door?* does not feature door-like pages in the same way as in *Knock Knock Who’s There?*, *Haunted House*, *Shhh!* and *Doors*, Nicola O’Byrne does draw, or has the reader draw, doors every three right spreads of her picturebook, i.e., the recto sides of the pages, which the reader has to turn to reach the next page, as if pushing a half-open door open to get to the next room. Interestingly, O’Byrne resorts to cut-out pages, “pageturners” in Nikolajeva and Scott’s sense, to offer the reader a preview of what is to come and push him/her to actually turn the page / cross the threshold.

The door/page equation is also exploited, albeit in a slightly different manner, via the lift-the-flap devices used in four out of the six picturebooks included in the corpus: *Postman Bear*, *Haunted House*, *Doors* and *Shhh!*. Flaps have been identified as having a family resemblance with doors indeed (Gressnich, 2012: 173), and this similarity is reinforced in the above cited picturebooks, with door-shaped flaps. In Donaldson and Scheffler's *Postman Bear*, child readers are invited to open small door-flaps on four doublespreads of the picturebook to find out who lives in the homes Bear is walking towards in order to mail his letters and to find out, at the end of the book, who is knocking at his door. In *Haunted House*, the reader can explore every nook and cranny of the scary house s/he has entered, wondering what s/he will find behind the cupboard or closet doors s/he opens. In *Doors*, the reader is not only encouraged to open door-flaps to enter a fire station, a train wagon, a stable, a doctor's practice, ... and even a space station, s/he is invited to look for specific items that may be hidden behind these doors, or behind smaller doors/flaps behind the first doors s/he opens. The search-and-find game, however, soon becomes a pretext to frantically open doors of all sizes and shapes though, endowing the book with a dizzying quality. This is especially the case on the page featuring the space station, where the reader can open three successive flaps and get a glimpse of space and planet Earth. The door-flaps in *Shhh!* seem of a slightly different nature, as, Smith argues, "they are on the left-hand page, and they work *backwards*. The reader uses them retrospectively, to check that the giant has not been disturbed. The emotions evoked, therefore, are not anticipation and discovery, but trepidation and relief" (2001: 233). However, in terms of flap lifting and conceivably page handling, these door-flaps function in the same manner as the doorflaps previously discussed.

Alternately lifting door-like flaps and turning the pages of picturebooks help child readers develop their fine motor skills, and more specifically become proficient, or at least more agile, at flap-lifting and page-turning. Additionally, lifting door-like flaps and turning door-like pages make it possible for child readers to feel the pleasure of realizing that they are in control, that they are not merely the recipients of a tale, but the participants of an adventure that begins with their opening a door.

3. Back to metaphorical door-openings

Picturebooks highlighting the similarity between doors and pages (and/or flaps) seem to open up possibilities for their young readers, who can consequently become so proficient at turning pages and lifting flaps that the effort required in the page-turning/flap-lifting event is eventually carried out with ease, which allows them to become *lus* in Picard's sense (1986: 214), i.e., engrossed and captivated by the picturebook as discourse, and, in time, *lectants* in Picard's sense (1986: 214), i.e., readers who can concentrate on the significance and signification of the page-turning event.

3.1. Opening the door to immersive experiences

Just as learning to walk is a path of many steps, learning to enter the world of fiction through books is an acquired skill. Picturebooks regularly superimposing pages, flaps, and doors which lead their readers into previously unknown worlds fill their readers with the sense that feeling immersed in the world of the told is, or will soon become, as easy as turning a page. The immersive experiences are, of course, varied. Some doors open onto small, rather familiar places (*Postman Bear*, some of the pages of *Doors*), others open onto uncanny places, which are the living quarters of scary creatures (*Haunted House*, *Knock Knock Who's There?*, *Shhh!*). Others still convey the belief that turning the pages of a book or lifting its flaps can be equivalent to crossing thresholds into excitingly unknown worlds, unrelated to the world depicted on the previous page (*Doors*, *What's Next Door?*)—reinforcing the conceptual metaphors BOOKS ARE DOORS and READING IS A JOURNEY mentioned earlier.

Munro's *Doors* implements this approach very explicitly from the very first page of the book, which invites the child readers to "[l]ift the flaps and step through doors into wonderful worlds that [they] can explore" and to "[o]pen the door to a fantasy"; the last page of the book then asks the reader to manipulate a very large flap in the shape of a book cover, which is described on the corresponding left spread as a door ("This is a door of a

different kind—to fantastic worlds that will open your mind”). Munro’s *Doors* invites its readers to look for specific items on each righthand spread. It belongs indeed to the traditional puzzle book category, which privileges what Rémi calls “a hierarchic mode of reception”, with some elements being “the beholders’ chief cognitive priority”, while others are first “distractors” that are only treated as “elements of their own right” subsequently (2010: 119–120). While the door-flaps in Munro’s *Doors* may be deemed to constitute “distractors” as they are elements which potentially conceal the much-looked-for items, they are also thought of as the “cognitive priority”, since the narrative voice repeatedly encourages its readers to open them (“open the door”, “behind this door is a distant place”). Readers opening these various doors are, therefore, constructed as travelers visiting different places. The world of the told and the world of the telling are metaleptically merged, with the reader being directly addressed by the narrator and told to “stow [his or her] luggage” or asked: “What was that I heard you say? Behind this door you heard a neigh?”

O’Byrne’s *What’s Next Door?* likewise takes its readers and Crocodile Carter, who needs help to find his way home, to very different places: a stormy sea, a forest covered in snow and a sultry desert. Or rather, the picturebook asks the reader to use his/her finger to draw doors and then to “think very hard about somewhere wet”, to *not* “think of the ocean”, to “think of somewhere hot. Super hot. Extra hot” and finally to “think very hard about somewhere that’s just right”. Crocodile Carter crosses the various doors that appear thanks to the reader’s intervention—or so it seems—and reach the sea, forest and desert, which are featured on the next doublespreads. In *What’s Next Door?*, the flesh-and-blood child reader is pulled in with the help of various rhetorical strategies, including imperative forms (“Use your finger to draw the door”) and polar questions (“Do you think Carter will fit through it? Can you give him a big push?”).

Direct addresses by the figure of the author and/or the narrator draw readers into the fiction in the most potent ways, indeed (see Iché & Sorlin, 2022: 3–4), namely owing to doubly deictic “you”, which superimposes the virtual narratee and the flesh-and-blood reader.⁴ Child readers probably find it hard to resist suggestions, such as “Use your finger to trace the dotted line” (*What’s Next Door?*) or “Look through that door and see if she [the cat] is still asleep” (*Shhh!*⁵), made to them directly, just like they probably open the door-flap as implicitly requested by the *wh*-question “Who lives in this tree?” (*Postman Bear*). The picturebooks studied herein abound indeed in two sorts of what Searle calls “directives”, i.e., “attempts [...] by the speaker to get the hearer to do something” (1979: 13, 36). The narrator’s orders and suggestions are sometimes conveyed directly, with no attempt at mitigating the directive speech act, through the use of direct directives—typically with the imperative form as shown earlier. But directives are also conveyed indirectly. For instance, the invisible but very much intrusive narrator of *What’s Next Door?* regularly asks questions about the reader’s ability to perform actions instead of issuing a direct directive with the help of an imperative form, for example: “Can you jiggle and wiggle the book to help him through?”, “Can you blow on him to dry him out?”, “Can you tip the book the help him through?”, “Can you turn the book upside down and shake the snow out?” The narrator of *Postman Bear* similarly asks the reader questions about his/her desire to do something instead of a more direct form of directive: “Shall we count the letters?” instead of “let’s count the letters”, “Would you like to open one?” instead of “open it!”. These picturebooks therefore construct the implied reader’s responses in the greatest details, whether directly or indirectly, in an attempt to determine the actual reader’s actions.

These strategies are, in effect, constraining on a certain level (Iché, 2016a: 60) and can be seen as limiting the child reader’s responses, revealing how difficult it may be for child readers of adult-authored children’s literature to escape what Nikolajeva calls “aetonormativity” (2009, 2010), i.e., normativity pertaining to adult age. But they can also be seen as ways to “maximize the benefit” to the reader, to use Leech’s words (1983: 132), and to enhance the reader’s pleasure. Indeed, direct addresses inviting the reader to open door-pages and lift door-flaps allow the reader to become *lu*, i.e., a reader surrendering to the textual and material structure of the picturebook, who thereby discovers that opening a paper door can open up large fictional and emotional horizons.

3.2. Opening the door to reflexive experiences

Picturebooks with flaps are designed to increase the child reader's physical interaction with the book, which often leads parents to think and publishers to argue that they support children's engagement with book contents. Nonetheless, scholars in psychology have contended that manipulative features, including flaps, are detrimental to children's ability to learn from picturebooks (Tare, Chiong, Ganea & DeLoache, 2010; Shinskey, 2021). Tare, Chiong, Ganea and DeLoache have analyzed 20-month-old to 29-month-old children's acquisition of labels and facts from picturebooks and concluded that children learned more words from realistic books with no manipulative features than from what they call "manipulative" books—hypothesizing that the children's cognitive loads might have been increased because of these manipulative characteristics (2010: 400). Shinskey examined how 2-year-old children's word-learning of a new word for an unfamiliar food was impacted by seeing a realistic lift-the-flap picturebook vs. seeing the same picturebook, but with flaps being either removed or laminated flat. She concluded that adding tactile features to pictures "may make it harder for children to represent the picture's symbolic relation to its referent rather than its concrete nature, even when the picture's iconicity makes this symbolic relation more transparent" (2021: 650).

However, as is acknowledged by Tare, Chiong, Ganea and DeLoache themselves, the adults reading the picture books included in the studies did not allow the children to explore the picturebooks' manipulative features. "Conversational scaffolding"—i.e., proceeding incrementally, first discussing each animal, then giving time to lift the flaps and/or pull the tabs, then giving time to process new information—could lead to greater factual and word acquisition (2010: 400). Moreover, as Shinskey has pointed out, the scope of these studies is limited to "educational" books, understood as "designed to teach [children] new information", which she posits as distinct from "narrative storybooks that are designed to entertain children" (2021: 650).

Yet, the dichotomy between educational and narrative picturebooks seems to conceal the fact that narrative picturebooks, or at least the best narrative picturebooks, do encourage their readers to expand their horizons—whether in terms of representation, genre or language. In the case of picturebooks including pageturners, Gressnich contends that they "encourage the child to take an active part in the reading process" as they tendentially require "an interactive and conversational reading" (2012: 180). Bartow further shows how "the page break invites the reader into the story as he/she becomes responsible for helping to make sense of the narrative" (2016: 359)—in other words, the page break can "provide the reader a space to engage in a 'writerly' read (Barthes, 1977) in that they demand the reader insert himself/herself into the formation of the narrative" (2016: 367).

The picturebooks studied in this article cannot be described as "educational" in the sense that they do not aim to teach their readers words or facts, but they do teach them, albeit not explicitly, how to experience books and narratives. In particular, their focus on doors, door-flaps and door-pages may help their readers realize the significance of the page-turning process in the understanding of picturebooks and how this reflexive activity is required to experience the picturebook to the fullest—in other words, how they need to become *lectants*, in Picard's sense. As Boyce explains, a careful examination of the front cover/door of *Haunted House* enables the reader to anticipate what role is going to be required of him/her. The cover "hints at the unknown lurking within—although the octopus tentacle writhing through the letterbox belies normal expectations about ghosts" (2011: 246); "[t]he note, 'Let yourself in,' stuck behind the door-knob, invites readers to take control by establishing that no one is going to open the door for them, the action now being the choice of the reader, who implicitly takes ownership of the experience" (2011: 246–247).

Becoming a *lectant*, however, does not completely correspond to becoming "active" in a purely physical sense though. As Picard puts it, *lectants* analyze the books they read and deconstruct their underlying structure or discourse to better understand and enjoy it; they can be "active" in a physical sense, but are above all "active" in an analytical sense. One can contend that this may happen to observant readers of these picturebooks—which child readers may, of course, be.⁶ For instance, while the observant reader of *What's Next Door?* will only see a blank space through the first cutout page and cannot, therefore, anticipate the fact that Crocodile Carter, the

invisible narrator and the reader will “fall” into a stormy ocean after crossing the threshold/ turning the page, s/he will notice some snowflakes through the next cut-out page— hinting at the fact that they will next visit a very cold place, which is utterly unsuitable for a crocodile. The observant reader turned *lectant* will, in all likelihood, understand and relish the fact that the whole book is a joke on the reader, who is repeatedly invited to imagine a good place for Crocodile Carter but will repeatedly send him to inappropriate places ... at least till the very last page of the book. The reader turned *lectant* of *Shhh!* will similarly analyze the role of the various door-flaps that appear on every two left spreads after the child-visitor has entered the castle. After noting that lifting the door-flaps serves only to confirm the stasis (the cat is still asleep, the hen is still laying eggs, the giant’s wife is still cooking dinner), the observant reader will notice the giant chess table in the giant’s bedroom in which there is a new door-flap. This may prompt him/her to turn a couple of pages back, for, after all, flaps in *Shhh!* being on the left spread and working backward (Smith, 2001: 233) may suggest that reading does not only mean going forward but also sometimes going backward. This may, subsequently, lead the reader-turned-*lectant* to consider the copresence of troubling elements in the first part of the picturebook (a human skull on the floor, a broken egg and loose feathers here and there, a human leg and two eyes in the giant’s wife’s cooking pot) and playful elements in the second part of the picturebook (two smiling adults chasing each other on a bowl, smiling chess pieces on the chessboard, three sheep on one castle-like chess piece, a flying banana in place of the moon, and a warmly-colored attic full of toys—a badminton racket, marbles, an old teddy bear that does need to be patched up, a smiling rocking dragon). This probably leads the readerturned-*lectant* to reconsider the purpose of the picturebook, which may be interpreted as a fun, if partially scary, game of hide and seek.

4. Concluding words

The picturebooks under analysis for this article all superimpose doors and pages and/ or doors and flaps. While the various devices can be interpreted as visual pageturners (Gressnich), which simply invite readers to keep reading, I have shown how literal door-openings in picturebooks do more than encourage the readers to keep turning the pages. The door/page equation, which the flap/page equation is but a variation of, serves three related goals:

1. Picturebooks with a focus on doors help turn the child reader into an experienced *liseur*, who, after being asked to turn many door-like pages and to lift many door-like flaps, no longer sees the page-turning event as a cumbersome gesture but also finds pleasure in it.
2. As a direct consequence of this, picturebooks with a focus on doors show the child reader how accessible the world of fiction is—as easily accessible as the next-door room—and how enjoyable it can be; in other words, they allow the child reader to become engrossed in the picturebook s/he reads, i.e., to become *lu*.
3. Picturebooks with a focus on doors draw the child reader’s attention to the page-turning or flap-lifting event and its key-role in the economy of a picturebook—in particular how going backward may be as important as going forward when reading, and how anticipating what will be represented on the next page adds to the understanding of the picturebook—thereby turning the child reader into a *lectant*, a role which is, of course, not accessible to adult readers only.

Thanks to Picard’s analysis of the tripartite composition of the reader, the traditional binary opposition of active vs. passive readers can be reassessed. Picturebooks with a focus on doors do not necessarily render their child readers more active than other picturebooks, but they do, however, empower them on these three related levels. Literal door-openings in children’s books thus open up large metaphorical horizons for their child readers, that include emergent literacy, pleasure reading and forms of agency.

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NOTES

1. Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), small capital letters are used to represent conceptual metaphors in order to distinguish them from their discursive manifestations. For instance, Stockwell subsumes the expressions "We follow the boy on his journey round the world", "I really got lost after the first few pages" and "you get taken along with the action" under the conceptual metaphor READING IS TRANSPORTATION (2009: 80).
2. Though some have posited that opening a lid is similar to opening a door (Gressnich, 2012:178), this is not the position defended in this article. The underlying metaphor to door-opening, I contend, is not the same as the metaphor of lid-lifting.
3. Picard's tripartite division of readers has been revisited by Jouve since, who stresses that readers are composed of three parts, which he calls *lectants*, *lisants* and *lus*. While Jouve's and Picard's *lectant* are similar, in the sense that they both represent the part of the reader which is aware that the text is a construct and should be analyzed as such, the other elements that Jouve theorizes (*lisant*, *lu*) are not equivalent to Picard's *liseur* and *lu*. Jouve's *lisant* is the part of the reader that is more susceptible to be influenced by the textual structures and accordingly identify with the fictional characters they read about; Jouve's *lu* is the part of the reader that uses the textual structures to try to satisfy their inner desires. While Jouve's theory sheds light on three ways readers construct characters through their reading, Picard's theory is more susceptible to enlighten the impact of children's literature on its young readers though, as it makes it possible to take into account the handling of the picturebook in the construction of the young reader.
4. See Herman (1994) for an in-depth analysis of double deixis.
5. See Iché (2016a: 57–59) for a closer analysis of the narrator-reader relationship in *Shhh!*.
6. As Hunt reminds us about the interpretation of the *Alice* books (but may be contended of any corpus), we should not *per se* valorize the adult reader's understanding over the child reader's (2011: 41).

ABSTRACT

Children's literature has famously been described as "windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange", and sometimes also "sliding glass doors" that readers have to "walk through in imagination" (Bishop, 1990: ix). In other words, children's literature is often depicted as being able to metaphorically open doors for their readers, i.e., open up vistas and broaden horizons. In this article, I pay attention to picturebooks with literal door-openings: *Haunted House* (1979) by Jan Pieńkowski, Jane Walmsley and Tor Lokvig, *Knock Knock Who's There?* (1985) by Sally Grindley and Anthony Browne, *Shhh!* (1991) by Sally Grindley and Peter Utton, *Postman Bear* (2000) by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, *Doors* (2004) by Roxie Munro and *What's Next Door?* (2017) by Nicola O'Byrne. I examine the various strategies implemented to get child readers to open (paper) doors—whether by focusing on the book-as-object with its flaps, door-like pages and cut-out pages, or by working on the book-as-discourse with, in particular, the use of direct addresses to the flesh-and-blood reader. I argue that door-openings in picturebooks help child readers achieve three main goals: (1) to become an experienced *liseur*, to take up Picard's terminology, who finds pleasure in the page-turning event, (2) to discover how accessible and enjoyable the world of fiction can be and thereby become *lu*, and (3) to become a *lectant*, aware, namely, of the key-role of the page break in the economy of the picturebook. Literal door-openings in children's books thus open up large metaphorical horizons for their child readers, that include emergent literacy, pleasure reading and forms of agency.

La littérature jeunesse est souvent décrite comme autant « de fenêtres ouvrant des perspectives sur des mondes réels ou imaginaires, familiers ou étranges », et parfois aussi comme des « portes de verre coulissantes » que les lecteurs doivent « franchir en imagination » (Bishop, 1990: ix, je traduis). En d'autres termes, la littérature jeunesse est souvent décrite comme pouvant métaphoriquement ouvrir des portes à ses lecteurs, c'est-à-dire ouvrir des perspectives et élargir des horizons. Dans cet article, j'analyse des albums jeunesse où le lecteur est invité à ouvrir littéralement des portes, à savoir : *Haunted House* (1979) de Jan Pieńkowski, Jane Walmsley et Tor Lokvig, *Knock Knock Who's There?* (1985) de Sally Grindley et Anthony Browne, *Shhh!* (1991) de Sally Grindley et Peter Utton, *Postman Bear* (2000) de Julia Donaldson et Axel Scheffler, *Doors* (2004) de Roxie Munro et *What's Next Door?* (2017) de Nicola O'Byrne. J'examine les différentes stratégies mises en œuvre pour amener les enfants lecteurs à ouvrir des portes (de papier) — que ce soit en se concentrant sur le livre-objet avec ses rabats, ses pages en forme de porte et ses pages découpées, ou en travaillant sur le livre-discours avec, notamment, l'utilisation d'adresses directes à l'enfant en chair et en os. Je soutiens que représenter des ouvertures de portes dans des albums jeunesse permet d'aider les enfants lecteurs à atteindre trois objectifs principaux : (1) devenir « liseur » expérimenté, selon la terminologie de Picard, qui trouve du plaisir à tourner les pages d'un livre, (2) découvrir que le monde de la fiction peut être accessible et agréable et devenir ainsi « lu », et (3) devenir « lectant », conscient, notamment, du rôle clé conféré à l'événement que constitue le fait de tourner la page dans l'économie des albums jeunesse. Les ouvertures littérales de portes dans les albums jeunesse ouvrent ainsi de larges horizons métaphoriques aux enfants lecteurs, qui incluent la littératie émergente, la lecture plaisir et des formes d'agentivité.

Mots-clés: album jeunesse, livre-objet, livre à rabats, tourne de page, littératie émergente

Keywords: picturebook, book-as-object, lift-the-flap book, page-turning event, emergent literacy