

THERE AND BACK AGAIN:
A BRIEF SURVEY OF WORDLESS PICTUREBOOKS

By

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2003

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by

Trena R. Houp

This document is dedicated to my family.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I want to thank my colleagues at the University of Florida. I also thank John Cech for all his honesty, patience, support, advice and encouragement during the completion of this project. I thank Kenneth Kidd as well, for always reassuring me in this endeavor and in others. In addition, I appreciate my friends, whose undying support gave me strength, and who provided an outlet for me to escape work, when needed. Last but not least, I am grateful for my parents and appreciate all they have done for me.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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May 2003

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Major Department: English

In the early 20th century, an increased fascination with pictorial images due to the success of comic strips and cinema created a suitable environment for the production of wordless woodcut novels. These novels were short-lived, but they significantly influenced the development of wordless picturebooks by demonstrating that image only texts could be successful in presenting narratives. Although wordless picturebooks are often viewed as simple or primitive, and are categorized as being for children, they are actually complex narratives appealing to adults and children at a variety of levels. This thesis, therefore, will provide a brief survey of wordless picturebooks to show how such books present narratives. In addition, this thesis will demonstrate that this unique literary form is really working off of a long established tradition of visual narrative.

THERE AND BACK AGAIN:
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Regarding the production of wordless picturebooks, Rita Smith, curator of the Baldwin Library at the University of Florida notes:

The early books for children didn't have any illustration . . . it took many many years for publishers to be comfortable producing a book for children without words. Children's books were supposed to be educational, and although we know that a picture narrative can be as informational and educational as text . . . it took a while for the idea to evolve and be accepted. (Smith)

Smith's comments partly explain why the wordless picturebook is a relatively recent development in children's literature. The wordless picturebook first appears in the early 20th century. Due to the growing appeal of pictures in newspapers, in comic strips, and in cinema, artists began to make visual narratives in which only pictures were the active conveyers of the story. Pictures no longer assisted in the telling of stories; instead, they began to tell the stories themselves. According to David Beronä:

The public's eager acceptance of comic strips and the silent cinema in the early part of this century were also integral factors in the growing preoccupation with pictorial images. And so, the dynamic period of artistic experimentation in Europe that followed World War I, when artists created works that were the antithesis of everything ordinary and natural, was a suitable time for the arrival of books without words. ("Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward" 105)

Thus, this movement known as Modernism saw the development of wordless picturebooks.

As Barbara Bader points out in her discussion of this emerging form, Helen Sewell's [A Head for Happy](#) (1931) was a first step on the way towards wordless picturebooks (Bader 83). This work about three young girls trying to find a head for their

stuffed doll, has few words and contains wordless sequences that permit pictures, not the words, to carry the narrative. The words simply “punctuate the story line and expel emotion” and “are not essential to the continuity” of the story, so “one could do without them” (Bader 83). Bader also notes that after A Head for Happy, only one wordless picturebook appeared until more than thirty years later (Bader 83). This single book, according to Bader, is Ruth Carroll’s What Whiskers Did (1932). But there was still another wordless picturebook after A Head for Happy. In What Whiskers Did, the artist relates the adventures of a Scotty terrier as he breaks away from a boy to follow rabbit tracks, flees from a wolf down a rabbit hole, and then bids the rabbits farewell and returns home. This picturebook is a story told entirely in pictures with the occasional symbolic device such as a question mark (Bader 539-40). The next wordless picturebook after A Head for Happy, is Hans Augusto Rey’s Zebrology (1937). This book explains how zebras obtained their stripes, beginning with the opening pages of a white horse and a black horse on a grassy plain. The next page reveals the half-white and half-black offspring of this pairing. Then, these horses produce white and black striped progeny that have approximately five or six big stripes. The next few pages show descendants with a greater number of stripes until the final page depicts zebras. The Baldwin Library’s copy of this book comes with a card, presumably from the editor, saying the work is “entirely a picture book with no text, but the pictures so cleverly tell the story that words are unnecessary.” The author has also inscribed the library’s copy saying it is his first book in the English language. This statement is startling considering the work contains no words except the title. Certainly, anyone who reads in the same manner as English speaking readers can easily understand the narrative flow of this work. It can even be

argued that the pictures themselves form their own language because, like comics, wordless picturebooks communicate in a language that relies on a visual experience common to both author and reader (Eisner Comics and Sequential Art 7). In Western culture, the reader is trained to read from left to right, and from top to bottom. The arrangement of Zebrology to fit this pattern is the only thing that makes it a Western culture book, but not exclusively an English book. Even for readers who do not read from left to right, if the pictures were rearranged, but otherwise unaltered, to fit their reading pattern, these cultures, too, could easily understand the story presented in this picturebook.

After Zebrology, the wordless picturebook as a children's book form remained dormant until the 1960s. Bader claims this reemergence actually begins with the reprinting of What Whiskers Did in 1965, due to educators' emphasis on cognitive learning and learning to follow picture sequences in preparation for actually reading words. She also notes that Maurice Sendak's wordless passages in Where the Wild Things Are (1963), Hector Protector (1965) and other works helped lay the ground for the production of wordless picturebooks (Bader 540). However, although a flood of activity occurred in the 1960s, What Whiskers Did and Sendak were not entirely responsible for the reappearance of this art form. Several wordless or almost wordless picturebooks had already been published in the 1950s and early 1960s, including: Giovannetti's Max (1954); Hanns Reich's Children of Many Lands (1958); Charlotte Steiner's I am Andy: You Tell a Story Book (1960); Tomi Ungerer's Snail Where Are You (1962) and One, Two Where's My Shoe (1964); Elliott Gilbert's A Cat Story

(1963); Aldren Watson's The River (1963); William Wondriska's A Long Piece of String (1963) and Peter Wezel's The Good Bird (1964).

The emphasis on processing images in preparation for reading words is evident in Eric Carle's Do You Want To Be My Friend? (1971). The only words contained in this book are Little Mouse's repeated question of "Do you want to be my friend?" This book explicitly claims to be a "first step to reading." Its goal is for children to "learn basic prereading skills" because "the simple but strong story, even without words, must be 'read' from left to right, instilling the idea of linear sequences and forming a groundwork on which to build correct reading habits" (Carle jacket). Children need to read from left to right because Carle arranges his visuals in this manner. Carle places the animals so that their tails are on the left and their heads are on the right. Carle also draws the tail of the next animal to be encountered on the right side of each two-page spread, thus requiring the reader to turn the page. The description of this book as a first step to reading reflects educators' idea of the use of "pictures for their informational value" which relates to the "longstanding conviction that books for children should have a primarily educational purpose" (Nodelman 3).

Even though Do You Want To Be My Friend? can be "read" and its narrative grasped without the use of words, the jacket includes a summary of the story, or at least Carle's version of it, which might suggest that not everyone would be able to read this book. This summary, most likely included at the editor's or publisher's cautionary urging, undermines the capability of a wordless picturebook to tell a story in that, although this book "has a definite plot and subplot," the inclusion of the summary implies readers may not ascertain either. However, as with any other well-constructed story,

readers can read this story and learn its plot and subplot. This summary along with the description of the story as “simple” perpetuates the misconception that a wordless picturebook cannot be serious or of literary value. This misconception ignores the reality that “images without words, while they seem to represent a more primitive form of graphic narrative, really require some sophistication on the part of the reader” (Eisner Comics and Sequential Art 24). A wordless picture narrative is an extremely complicated form since it demands that the reader verbalize the story. This complexity is illustrated by the fact that many picturebooks are designed for both small children and adults, communicating to this dual audience at a variety of levels (Nikolajeva and Scott 9, 21). Children and adults alike can process complex visual texts because, for a “generation brought up with television...processing verbal and visual information on several levels is natural, even preferable” (Eisner Graphic Storytelling 4). Thus, although the primary readers of Do You Want To Be My Friend? are young children, this book can be read and appreciated by a more sophisticated audience. This dual readership recalls Jacqueline Rose’s ideas about the impossibility of children’s fiction. Children’s literature is unattainable because it hangs on “the impossible relation between adult and child” (Rose 1). Children’s fiction “does not speak *to* the child” because “the best book for children is a book for adult *and* child” (Rose 1-2). Using the example of Peter Pan, Rose argues that this book is for everyone, “which in itself neatly disposes of the whole issue of what we mean by fiction for children” (Rose 5). Similarly, wordless picturebooks are for both adults and children.

The wordless picturebook form is also underscored with the 1968 publication of the picturebook version of Albert Lamorisse’s short film, The Red Balloon (1956). The film,

The Red Balloon, tells the story of a young, lonely French boy and his friendship with a balloon that accompanies him in Paris and without any exchange of words between them. However, when the story was transformed into picturebook form using photographs taken during filming, words and dialogue are added to the story (Lamorisse). While the film was successful, and even won an Academy Award without words, the publisher did not trust that readers would be able to comprehend a wordless version even though the wordless picturebook had already established itself on the children's book scene. Children's book publishers are very cautious. It took publishers years to accept and be comfortable producing wordless picturebooks, so the publisher could be responding to potential purchasers such as parents and teachers who, in 1968, might still view wordless picturebooks as unusual despite the number of titles already in existence.

One of the earliest artists to contribute to and advance the form of the wordless picturebook is the American author and illustrator, Mercer Mayer. The first book Mayer published is his wordless picturebook, A Boy, A Dog and A Frog (1967). This book follows the adventures of a boy and his dog as they try to catch a frog. Unsuccessful in this endeavor, the boy and his dog give up and return home. The frog follows them and joins the boy and dog in the bathtub where the three become friends. A Boy, A Dog and A Frog begins a series of books including: A Boy, A Dog, A Frog and A Friend (1971) showing the addition of a turtle to the group of friends; Frog on His Own (1973) telling the adventures of frog when he separates from the group and roams the city park by himself; Frog Goes to Dinner (1974) relating the mischief that happens when frog, unbeknownst to the boy, accompanies him to a fancy restaurant for dinner with his family; and One Frog Too Many (1975) depicting frog's efforts to get rid of another frog

who is the newest addition to the group of friends. Mayer warmly illustrates this series of books in a muted brown and white instead of black and white. His images depict slapstick comedy reminiscent of the “old comic sequences” in newspapers (Bader 540). This is evident in A Boy, A Dog and A Frog when the boy and dog, running to catch the frog, trip over a branch and fall into the water. Then, when the pair attempt to trap the frog on a log where they can capture him, the frog falls as the dog approaches. The dog ends up in the boy’s net. Such instances bring to mind the gags used in newspaper comics, and both share the same function of attracting and holding the reader’s attention.

The comic sequences Mayer is drawing off of come from earlier sources of visual storytelling. In the middle of the 19th century, the young artist, Wilhelm Busch, began experimenting in graphic narrative, telling his stories in pictures and in words (Arndt 1). Busch was invited to become a regular contributor to the *Münchener Bilderbogen* (Munich Paper Strips) in 1859 and eagerly accepted. As Dieter Lotze notes, “from the humble beginnings as an illustrator of stories and jokes by others grew the genre that was to make Busch famous and the picture story in which drawing and text would complement each other” (17). Busch first won acclaim with Max und Moritz (1865), now considered the ancestor of the comic strip (Arndt 1). This story of two mischievous children was very popular. Since the 1886 Berne Convention on International Copyright did not say whether the law covered comic strips, the tale was widely plagiarized. It was in this incorporation “into cheap funny papers” that “Busch and the comic strip was to reach the millions outside of Germany” (Kunzle 158). However, even though the millions of people reading Busch included adults, the publication of Max und Moritz led to the categorization of Busch as a children’s author. In addition to demonstrating a bias

against comic strips, this classification reveals the importance of Busch to the canon of children's literature, for his works helped shape the contemporary state of picturebooks.

Max und Moritz is a moral tale introducing two bad children who are depicted as smiling and innocent although their seven evil deeds and disrespect for their elders prove otherwise. The two boys meet a “surreal end by a parody of the drastic and cautionary retribution so common in the German fairy tale” (Lotze 43, Arndt 1). As their final trick, Max and Moritz cut open Farmer Klein's sack of grain. The farmer discovers the slit, sees Max and Moritz, puts the “worthless pack” into a sack, and takes it to the miller who grinds it right away. The mill releases the two in pieces, which the miller's ducks eagerly devour. Then, the entire town offers “heartfelt thanks / For deliverance from pranks!” (Arndt 34-5). In this story, “many drawings are accompanied by the customary rhymed couplets,” but some drawings only have a single line of words, and some have none at all (Lotze 43). Thus, Max und Moritz was not only the origin of the newspaper comic strip, “but the first example of a dual art form” (Arndt 2). Lotze claims “Busch's unique ability to tell stories in verse and drawing, with the two modes of communication complementing, emphasizing, or contradicting each other, has never been matched” (Lotze 154). Busch was working in a hybrid genre, *Bildergeschichte*, “which leaves open or merges the semantic options of a tale of, in, or with pictures” (Arndt 10). *Bildergeschichte* allows both words and images to actively convey a story. Instead of serving as illustrations and simply repeating, clarifying, amplifying or decorating what is written, the visuals replaced words (Eisner Comics and Sequential Art 153).

Mercer Mayer's wordless picturebooks resemble Busch's tales because he creates a comedic narrative that holds the reader's attention. Mayer accomplishes this by

including details such as the facial expressions of the frog that grab the interest of the reader as well as add a lot to the story. As David Wiesner notes:

because the images are the “text,” everything in them must contribute not only to the advancement of the plot but to revealing the emotions and feelings of the characters. There are no words to tell us how characters are feeling or what they are thinking. Gestures, posture, and facial expressions alone must describe a personality. (qtd. in Richey and Puckett vii)

When the group of friends is searching for the lost frog in One Frog Too Many, the group’s faces and the slouched posture of the boy reveal concern for their lost friend. Likewise, in A Boy, A Dog and A Frog, the facial expressions and stance of the frog communicate his feelings and thoughts. The frog’s hunched demeanor and his pursed lips show the annoyance he feels with the boy and dog and their attempts to catch him. Similarly, the tall pose and wide smile of the frog admits the joy he feels when he evades capture. Then, the frog’s downcast eyes and frown betray the loneliness he feels when the two abandon their cause, and his wide, open-mouthed smile makes known his happiness at reuniting with the boy and dog.

Mayer’s books, although comical, are also didactic. The adventures of the boy and his animal friends offer lessons about friendship, forgiveness, and acceptance. These teachings are especially evident in One Frog Too Many. When Frog tries desperately to get rid of the new frog by displaying aggression in biting its leg or by pushing it off the boat into the water, Frog sees how much the others care about this addition to the group. Frog learns about acceptance when the new frog forgives Frog for his antics. Another frog learns about these lessons in the wordless picturebook Why? (1996) by Nikolai Popov. In this book, a mouse invades the home of a frog and forcibly takes the frog’s flower. In revenge, the frog’s friends attack the mouse. The mouse and his friends then get even with a tank constructed from a boat. More battles and retaliations follow until

the mouse and frog are standing alone in a charred wasteland. Why? certainly provokes thought and makes readers question the brutality of war. Good picturebooks, such as Why?, offer us greater consciousness and Popov claims he created this book to show “the senselessness of war” and “how easily one can be sucked into a cycle of violence” (Nodelman 285, Popov author’s note). Popov hoped that, by depicting the brutality of war, his readers could “become a force for peace in the future” (Popov author’s note). War begins in the relationships between people; therefore, peace can only be achieved by improving these relationships. The frog and mouse do not put aside their differences to form a friendship and coexist in peace. Instead, they destroy everything around them.

While the frog and mouse in Why? obliterate their world, readers can “annihilate the world with a book” according to Hélène Cixous (Cixous 19). Cixous claims “reading is escaping in broad daylight,” and that books may be an instrument of separation because “as soon as you open the book as a door, you enter another world” and close the door on this world (Cixous 20). This theme of entering another world is central to the wordless fantasy picturebooks that entice their readers to join them in an imaginative world. One example of an imaginary world is Lynd Ward’s The Silver Pony (1973). The Silver Pony presents the story of a young farm boy who finds a winged silver pony. The boy lures the pony closer by offering him an apple. Next, the boy jumps on the pony to go on a fantastic flight. The two fly over the farm and through a forest until they reach a frozen landscape. Then, they travel to a flooded town, a big city and a desert village. Finally, when trying to reach the sun, the boy and the pony venture into outer space. The two have gone too high, and an explosion ensures that the boy falls back down to earth. When the boy awakes, he finds his father has purchased a young silver pony.

Ward's subtitle for The Silver Pony is "a story in pictures," which is similar to those of his woodcut novels. This subtitle and the 175 page length of the picturebook implies Ward intended this work to be accepted as a wordless novel, but it also reveals a connection to the earlier form of visual narrative. However, The Silver Pony is not placed in the same category as Ward's wordless woodcut novels such as Gods' Man, Madman's Drum or Wild Pilgrimage. While these novels are housed in the Architecture and Fine Arts library at the University of Florida, The Silver Pony is in the children's section of the Education Library.

Ward's wordless picturebook, The Silver Pony, stems from his earlier wordless narratives. Beginning in the 1930s, Ward began producing wordless woodcut novels after drawing inspiration from the works of Frans Masereel and Otto Nückel. The novels of Ward, Masereel and Nückel were sometimes referred to as pictorial narratives (Beronä "Breaking Taboos" 90). These wordless woodcut novels borrowed themes from art and literature and made them available to anyone regardless of wealth, race, gender, language and level of literacy. Ward, Masereel and Nückel presented these themes in narrative formats similar to adventure comics of the era, which the comic scholar Will Eisner recognizes when he states such works established an historical precedent for modern graphic storytelling (Beronä "Breaking Taboos" 91-2; Eisner Graphic Storytelling 1).

In 1918, the Belgian artist, Frans Masereel, published the first wordless woodcut novel by combining the narrative and expressive qualities of the woodcut when he published 25 images de la passion d'un homme (Cohen 171, 179). In Europe, woodcuts were first used as decorations on clothing, wall hangings and leather works, then began to be used in book illustration (Cohen 172-3). After enjoying much success, woodcuts were

replaced by engraving, and later, etching until the form was revived and improved.

Whereas early woodcuts had been mostly produced by cutting away wood to only leave portions that corresponded to black lines, Thomas Bewick started using engraving tools rather than wood cutting tools. With engraving tools, Bewick produced a method of wood engraving where the unengraved, black when printed ground of the wood is undisturbed except for the lines cut to make the pattern or figure (Cohen 176-7).

Woodcuts are made from blocks of wood cut with the grain parallel to the surface, but wood engraving uses blocks cut across the grain. This method produces a smoother surface to make the wood engraving finer by allowing more detailed lines and texture (Beronä “Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward” 110). This technique of wood engraving became a leading method of book illustration. Soon, other techniques followed, including not only cutting with the grain, but choosing the wood and preparing it so the grain would be printed as part of the design (Cohen 178).

Masereel’s woodcut novel arranged a series of narrative woodcut pictures in book form where the pictures relied on each other to extend the plot. By “subordinating the balance of the individual picture to the narrative flow” and using lines of force in the pictures to lead off the page and take the reader to the next picture, Masereel “asserts the integrity of the novel as a whole” (Cohen 182). Masereel’s novels were usually episodic in plot and focused on a single, lonely hero while representing scenes of ordinary life. Using simple iconography and familiar symbols, his novels showed themes of travel, love, and respect for the working class (Cohen 180). When discussing Masereel’s novels, Stefan Zweig states:

Were all to perish, all books, monuments, photographs and accounts, and only preserved were the woodcuts . . . one could from these alone reconstruct our whole

current world, one would know how one lived in 1920, how we were dressed; one would understand the whole dreadful war on the Front in the Hinterland, with all its devilish machine and grotesque faces, understand the markets and machines and railroad halls and ships and towers, and customs, and men. (qtd. in Cohen 180-181)

Masereel's narrative of pictures details the daily life and experiences of the people in 1920s Europe. Masereel continued to create many woodcut novels detailing this time period, producing more than twenty of these novels without words (Beronä "Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward" 105).

Masereel's second woodcut novel, Mein Stundenbuch (Passionate Journey in English) published in 1919, is regarded as his greatest. This work follows the adventures of the young hero from his arrival in a big city to his entering the woods to die alone 165 plates later (Cohen 183-4). Masereel overemphasizes elements in his art to make readers notice icons readers accustomed to symbolic art would effortlessly recognize. He also adds a cartoon-like flavor to his ending (Cohen 188-9).

Mein Stundenbuch was successful and influential. When asked what movie had made the greatest impression on him, Thomas Mann, winner of the 1929 Nobel Prize for Literature, replied Passionate Journey (Mein Stundenbuch). Regarding this novel, Mann says, "You will be captivated from beginning to end: from the first picture showing the train plunging through dense smoke and bearing the hero toward life to the very last picture showing the skeleton-faced figure wandering among the stars" (Beronä "Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward" 105). Mann's response is not surprising considering Maurice Sendak's idea of "quicken." "Quickening" suggests something musical, rhythmic and animated. According to Sendak, "to quicken" "suggests the genuine spirit of animation, the breathing to life, the swing into action." Sendak considers this an essential quality in

books that primarily tell their stories through pictures (Sendak Caldecott & Co. 3).

Extending this argument, Sendak says:

Sequential scenes that tell a story in pictures . . . are an example of one form of animation. It is no difficult matter for an artist to stimulate action, but it is something else to quicken, to create an inner life that draws breath from the artist's deepest perception. (Caldecott & Co. 3)

Thus, for Sendak, “quicken” means bringing life to the pictures and this is what Masereel achieves in Mein Stundenbuch.

Although not much is known about Otto Nüchel, the German artist illustrated a few books and produced a lengthy wordless novel, Destiny, using lead plates. In this novel, Nüchel created a unique texture by using a tool that allowed him to engrave many lines at once to produce the noted hatching seen in many of his plates (Beronä “Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward” 112-4). Destiny, which became popular in the United States as well as in Europe, tells the story of a poor girl by “tracing her life from childhood through work, seduction, infanticide, jail, prostitution, marriage, adultery, murder and death” (Cohen 191-2). Ward praised Nüchel’s use of “plot development and subtle psychological interplay between characters,” which Ward himself would later develop, most notably in Wild Pilgrimage (Beronä “Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward” 112). Similarly, Will Eisner appreciates Destiny for its sophistication and complex graphic narrative (Graphic Storytelling 139).

Ward’s publication of his first wordless woodcut novel, Gods’ Man, in 1929 was an immediate success. Gods’ Man sold over 20,000 copies in four years. The novelty of reading a wordless novel attracted many readers because the works of Masereel and Nüchel were not yet available in the United States (Beronä “Breaking Taboos” 93, 95). In this novel, Ward tells the plight of an artist whose bargain for material success

ultimately destroys his talent. Near death, a woman nurses the artist back to health. Then, the artist finds happiness in a simple country life with the woman and their child until he must pay the debt of his initial bargain with his life (Beronä “Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward” 108).

Like Masereel, Ward’s woodcut novels focus on social ills. His novels show the social realities of America during the Depression. Ward points out that his heroes can only temporarily isolate themselves from the city and the malice it represents. He also repeats the theme that death is inescapable (Beronä “Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward” 108, 110). Ward’s second book, Madman’s Drum (1930) emphasizes character development. To attract the reader’s attention to the characters, Ward accentuates decorative patterns in dress materials and interior walls (Beronä “Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward” 110). In Madman’s Drum, a slave trader kills an African for his ornate drum, which the trader brings home as a prize. The curse of the drum is passed from father to son. Ultimately, the son pays the price of the father’s sin by public ridicule and spiritual ruin after failing to see the needs of his family and the social ills surrounding him (Beronä “Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward” 112). In his next novel, Wild Pilgrimage (1932), Ward again stresses character maturation by making a distinction between the inner and outer psychological world of his hero. Ward accomplishes this by changing the color of his printed block. Ward presents the outer world of the hero in black and white, but when he examines the inner world of the hero, the color shifts to an off-red (Beronä “Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward” 114).

Ward’s last woodcut novel returns to his portrayal of social ills. Vertigo (1937) presents a complex work of 230 images depicting the United States during the

Depression. Ward uses several small blocks so that facial expressions more effectively register the emotional response of the character. Ward “meant to suggest that the illogic of what we saw happening all around us in the thirties was enough to set . . . the emotions hurtling from great hope to the depths of despair” (Beronä “Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward” 118-9). This work in particular would greatly influence the work of Will Eisner who credits this totally graphic technique as an impetus for the creation of the graphic novel. Eisner says Ward “stands out as perhaps the most provocative graphic storyteller in this century” (Graphic Storytelling 141). Eisner also notes Vertigo succeeds in telling a complete, compelling story, thus demonstrating the viability of the form. By using an entire page as a panel and printing on only one side of the leaf, Ward makes the reader turn the page to get to the next panel. These full-page spreads also give the reader time to dwell on each picture and force the reader to be an active participant in supplying dialogue and the intervening flow of action between the pages. Therefore, these panels allow the author total reader engagement (Eisner Graphic Storytelling 141).

Although successful, the wordless woodcut novel disappeared as World War II approached. Ward partly blamed the complicated and violent world during this time of war for the demise of this form. However, other factors, such as television and cheap photo off-set processes contributed as well. Photo off-set processes cancelled out the respect for labor implied by the handcrafting of woodcuts since, with these processes, a series of line drawings could be quickly translated to book form (Cohen 193-4).

Even though he no longer produced woodcut novels, Ward still enjoyed much success as an illustrator, especially as a children’s book illustrator. Ward illustrated Elizabeth Coatsworth’s Cat Who Went to Heaven, which received the Newbery Medal in

1931. Ward also received the Caldecott Medal in 1953 for The Biggest Bear, a story he wrote and illustrated (Beronä “Woodcut Novels of Lynd Ward” 105, 108).

Like Ward’s The Silver Pony, the wordless picturebooks of Fernando Krahn and David Wiesner portray an imaginative world. In The Creepy Thing (1982) Krahn creates a world where a boy catches a green, plantlike thing that dances when he plays his harmonica. In The Secret in the Dungeon (1983) Krahn presents an environment where a little girl encounters a sleeping dragon while exploring an old castle. And, in Amanda and the Mysterious Carpet (1985) Krahn draws a world so that Amanda can ride on a flying carpet.

David Wiesner’s Tuesday (1991), Sector 7 (1999) and Free Fall (1988) also act as doorways inviting readers to enter another world. The world of Tuesday, which won the Caldecott Medal, is one where frogs can ride on hovering lily pads. Wiesner’s watercolor images depict the adventures of the frogs zooming through the air. Some frogs fly through sheets on a clothesline to form a cape while others invade the home of an old woman and commandeer her television while she sleeps. The facial expressions of the frogs and the perplexed and sometimes scared looks of the animals who witness this extraordinary flight, such as the turtle, the fish and the dog, lure the reader into this world where anything is possible. Sector 7 also brings the reader into an imaginary world where clouds are produced and shaped in a factory in the sky. The boy in the story is able to disrupt this imaginary world when he alters the blueprints of the clouds to make them take on interesting shapes such as that of a star, an octopus or a fish “to make others see the world in a new way” (Wiesner jacket). While this book allows readers to escape, it also allows them to view the world in a new and interesting way, where clouds do not

have to assume the shapes of cotton balls and instead can form a variety of shapes. Similarly, Free Fall depicts a world in which a boy can participate in the stories of his books. As the boy sleeps, the pages of his books open to reveal a sequence of actions where the boy, items in his room, and the reader are permitted to take part. The boy plays chess with a set that turns into people, he slays a dragon, he rides on a pig through a canyon, and he travels on the backs of swans that turn into leaves. This world exists when the boy is asleep, but when he awakes, everything is as it should be in his room. By setting up his book this way, Wiesner is creating a distinction and tension between the real world, which exists when the boy is awake and the imaginative, fantastic world that exists when the boy is asleep. This arouses curiosity about what happens when people go to sleep and generates a mystery that tempts readers and holds their attention while taking them into Wiesner's dream world.

Wiesner is not the only author to capitalize on the curiosity about what happens when we sleep. Like Wiesner's Free Fall, Nancy Tafuri's Junglewalk (1988) constructs a world where a boy can travel to the place he was reading about before going to sleep. While the boy sleeps, he ventures to the jungle to encounter tigers, exotic birds, monkeys, an alligator, hippopotamuses, gorillas, elephants and zebras. Likewise, Jamichael Henterly's Good Night, Garden Gnome (2001) also creates a fantasy world existing at night. This picturebook tells the story of a garden gnome who magically rises at dusk to perform duties such as tending the corn, watering the garden, keeping bugs and animals away from the garden and returning a missing teddy bear to its sleeping child owner. The gnome regains consciousness while the child sleeps. When day breaks, the gnome once again returns to statue form concealing his other life. Peter Collington's The Midnight

Circus (1992) also reveals an inanimate object coming to life. When a boy's favorite coin ride pony is taken away and replaced by a new rocketship, the horse assumes living form, returns and takes the boy on a journey to the circus. Together, the boy and the pony enjoy the thrills and excitement the circus has to offer.

While these books draw readers into an imaginative world, Maurice Sendak accomplishes the same through his collected series of drawings in Fantasy Sketches (1970). The sketches included in this collection show the completion of a whole story on one page through a series of images. Each story captivates and holds the reader's attention while making events such as a fish, or a cat, eating a child seem normal (Sendak Fantasy Sketches). An interesting detail about Sendak's sketches is that music accompanies their creation, and Sendak often includes the name of the music that inspired each sequence. Sendak, when possible, wanted each sketch to begin and end with the music itself and this can be seen in that the rhythm of the sketches follows the rhythm of the music that inspires them (Fantasy Sketches). According to Will Eisner, in music or the other forms of auditory communication, actual lengths of time achieve rhythm or beat. In graphics, rhythm is carried out by the use of visual illusions and symbols and their arrangement such as in requiring the sequence be read in a prescribed order to determine who speaks first, or framing the action to indicate duration of time, or varying the number and size of the panels (Eisner Comics and Sequential Art 26-8). In Fantasy Sketches, Sendak produces rhythm with his graphics, images that "truly connect in order to more clearly evoke the intervening action" (Graphic Storytelling 70). This is not surprising considering Sendak's idea of "quickenings."

“To quicken,” artists must not only achieve rhythm, but also show duration of events and perspective. Whereas rhythm is important for making the reader become involved in a story, the ability to convey temporality is critical to the success of a visual narrative. When narrative art “presumes to imitate reality in a meaningful chain of events and consequences and thereby evoke sympathy, the dimension of time is an inescapable ingredient” (Eisner Comics and Sequential Art 28). Demonstrating temporal change is more illusory because it is measured and perceived through the memory of experience, but flow of time can be expressed through a sequence of pictures (Eisner Comics and Sequential Art 25-6; Nikolajeva and Scott 139). Temporality is conveyed by the sequence of pictures in John S. Goodall’s The Story of a Castle (1986). In this picturebook, the pages are arranged so that whole pages are separated by half pages allowing the pictures contained on the half pages to blend in with and become part of the whole pages. Goodall sets up his book this way so each half-page depicts the passage of time by revealing differences in the castle. Changes show the castle moving from the past, when the site for the castle is chosen, to its construction, then its partial destruction during an invasion, to its rebuilding, its renovations and finally, to the present when it is opening up to public tours.

An important technique for presenting temporal change is paneling. In addition to containing thoughts, ideas, actions and locations, “paneling or boxing the action not only defines its perimeter, but establishes the position of the reader in relation to the scene and indicates the duration of the event” (Eisner Comics and Sequential Art 28, 38). For example, in Peter Sis’s An Ocean World (1992), to show the growth of the whale, Sis arranges six panels, all of which have the whale’s pool, side by side on one page to

demonstrate that only the whale's size has changed in relation to the pool. This serves to tell the reader much time has past since the whale first entered the pool. Having outgrown the pool, the whale is released into the ocean. Sis then moves to full-page spreads depicting the whale swimming in the ocean until, when wanting to present temporality, Sis returns to a segmented page. This page contains sixteen panels, all exhibiting the whale swimming in different types of weather at different times of day. By doing this, Sis not only reveals a temporal change, but also sets up a sense of urgency as the reader realizes the whale's determination in searching for others of its kind. These sixteen frames also force us to pay attention, which Perry Nodelman claims is the function of framing (Nodelman 51). When the next page returns to a full-page panel, Sis's panels on the previous page not only separate the scenes, but also act as a punctuator. These panels evoke more sympathy from the reader as the intent of the frames "is not so much to provide a stage as to heighten the reader's involvement with the narrative" (Eisner Comics and Sequential Art 46). This allows Sis "to quicken," or give life to the pictures contained in this book.

Perspective is also an important element in visual narrative. According to Will Eisner, "the primary function of perspective should be to manipulate the reader's orientation for a purpose in accord with the author's narrative plan" or to produce various emotional states in the reader (Comics and Sequential Art 89). This function of perspective is evident in Sara's Across Town (1991). The book begins with single panels depicting a man in a trench coat taking up two pages. The reader first sees the man from the side. Then, perspective shifts so the man is viewed from behind making him mysterious. The panels become smaller and smaller so as to increase the reader's

suspense and curiosity about the stranger. Next, two eyes and a cat, seemingly much larger than the man, appears. As the perspective changes to show the cat to be of normal size, the man bends to carry the animal in his arms, and terror dissolves. The initially gloomy and disturbing mood of the story becomes reassuring and friendly.

As seen from the examples related here, the wordless picturebook is a complicated form. However, the complexity of the form itself indicates a dual audience. Children and adults alike can appreciate a wordless picturebook because many artists, such as Sendak, do not write with children in mind (Caldecott and Co. 214). The pictures of these artists require reading and interpretation and are not understood effortlessly. As Wiesner notes, “care is necessary to ‘read’ the pictures.” Readers “who glance quickly through the pages may miss significant details that enrich a story and characterizations” (qtd. in Richey and Puckett vii). Since a wordless narrative requires readers to verbalize and add dialog to the story, young children can read the book creating their own stories according to the pictures. Likewise, adults more skilled in acts of verbalization can also read the book and construct stories because there is no one correct version. While the two distinct readers may not read the book the same way, both will appreciate the wordless picturebook, thus the form crosses generational boundaries.

The lack of words is also important for another reason; it allows for easier transmission into other cultures and languages. And because wordless picturebooks transcend the boundaries of language and easily bridge cultural differences, international artists are able to influence the contemporary development of this genre. For picturebooks, during the 1950s and ‘60s, American illustrators were “tremendously stimulated” by work from abroad. Sendak claims the European influence on American

illustrators was the best thing to happen to the genre (Caldecott and Co. 189). The international diversity in wordless picturebooks shows that visuals can be read and understood regardless of the reader's language. Peter Sis, Mercer Mayer and Fernando Krahn, although of very different backgrounds and nationalities, share the same audience by working in the medium of the wordless picturebook. So, in addition to crossing generational boundaries, the form also crosses those of culture and linguistics. This is important because it brings the contemporary state of the genre back to its ancient sources. Peter Sis actively uses and references some of these earlier forms of storytelling. In A Small Tall Tale From the Far Far North (1993), for example, Sis incorporates the conventions of Ice Age Art. When relating the tales of the Eskimos about the circle of life, Sis draws a sequence containing numerous iconographic images that parallel the images found in Ice Age Art, which began appearing about 35,000 years ago. Sis also includes panels that resemble the work of Wilhelm Busch when he frames drawings accompanied by one and sometimes two lines of text. The pictures in these panels differ from the rest of the images included in the book in that they are stylized to appear similar to Busch's drawings. These earlier forms of storytelling found in picturebooks shows the form has come full circle back to the beginnings of visual narrative. Thus, picturebooks, and more specifically, wordless picturebooks bring readers back to our prehistoric fascination with the ability of pictures to tell a story.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Trena R. Houp received her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Florida in 2001. Her work has been presented at the Will Eisner Symposium in 2002, the University of Florida English Graduate Organization's Theoretical Misfits Conference in 2002, and the Conference on Comics and Graphic Novels in 2003. Her area of specialization is children's literature and her interests are in visual narratives.

In my opinion, wordless picture books are even more difficult to "read" than other picture books. In order to comprehend a book in this genre, children must be thorough observers and read with a very careful and thoughtful eye. Wordless picture books push the reader to summarize, make inferences, interpret and evaluate visual information, ask questions, and make connections without any support from the written word. Young readers (pre-emergent, emergent, and early readers) can use wordless picture books to learn how the illustrations support and often drive a story. They can learn how to retel