

Dual Audiences, Double Pedagogies: Representing Family Literacy as Parental Work in Picture Books

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Abstract Narrative for a dual audience of children and adults is a field of expanding interest among children's literature scholars. A great deal of the extant research is implicitly or explicitly informed by longstanding anxieties about the status of children's fiction, a context that shifts the parameters of the analysis to questions of literary sophistication. Whilst some attention is paid to the reader-subject position of the child reader, rather less is given to the positioning of the adult reader in relation to the pedagogical agendas of such texts. This article examines picture books featuring parents reading to preschool children. In the context of family literacy, it is an instance in which the pedagogical address to the adult reader is as significant as the address to the child. Drawing on distinctions between double and dual address, the article examines the ways in which representations of parents

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reading to children position adult and child reading-subjects to understand reading as work and leisure, respectively. We conclude with some observations about how the dual address might in fact subvert the literacy agendas in these texts.

Keywords Narrative address · Picture books · Dual audience · Parental work · Literacy

Adults are always implicated in children's literature: if children's "books are to be published, marketed and bought, adults first must be attracted, persuaded and convinced" (Wall, 1991, p. 13). More recent research on the relationship of adults to children's literature has focused on its appeal to dual audiences of adults and children and the phenomena of cross-writing and crossover fiction (see, for instance, Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2008). Crossover fiction includes works written for children that attract adult readers (and vice versa), those adapted for a younger audience, and those deliberately cross-written for an audience of children and adults simultaneously. Picture books for very young children most commonly fall into the category of cross-writing. More than any other genre of children's literature, picture books are designed to be read by adults to children, and thus, by adults *and* children. According to Maria Nikolajeva, "contemporary picture book creators seem to be very much aware of this ... an intelligent picture book takes into consideration the dual audience, offering both parts something to appreciate and enjoy" (2003, p. 243). Of course, as Sue Saltmarsh (2007, p. 95) points out, "Picture books for children are widely recognised as having ideological, pedagogical and constitutive functions that extend well beyond the aesthetic pleasures" experienced by adult and child readers. These functions arguably apply to both sets of readers, yet comparatively little attention is paid to how adults are positioned in relation to the pedagogies of the text. In this article, we examine picture books that feature images of parents reading to preschool children in order to investigate the pedagogical address to the adult in relation to family literacy. Reading to children is a recurring motif in picture books for preschool children; it is also widely promoted by the media, government and educators as good parenting practice.

In 1982, Shirley Brice Heath's landmark work on family literacy, "What No Bedtime Story Means: Narrative Skills at Home and School," drew attention to the genres of early reading material to which her adult cohorts exposed their children. Her research suggests that young children exposed to narrative fiction, which is to say, the "literate tradition," outperform at school those children exposed to other textual genres, for instance, non-fiction. The thrust of Heath's argument, however, ultimately rests on the role played by adult participants in the reading event and the skills in which they consciously or unconsciously tutor their children. Since then, although family literacy has grown into a "significant field" of research, it "has remained focused on identifying the practices that are most like or unlike school practices" (Carrington and Luke, 2003, p. 229) and on investigating literacy practices in a social context (Barton et al., 2000). Much less notice has been taken of how reading practices are represented in texts or what literary theory might reveal about the discourses regarding family literacy that inform them. This is in spite of

Serafini's (2004) study of images of picture books aimed at school age children, which revealed a number of tensions between the representation of reading in these texts and theories of reading and literacy.

In this paper, we draw on theories of dual and double address to examine some of the textual tensions in the address to adult and child in regard to family literacy, focusing on the address to the adult in a small selection of picture books and its implications for children. These texts are indicative of trends we identified in a corpus of 100 picture books analysed in a pilot project on textual representations of family literacy interactions, conducted in 2009–2010.¹ Using pictorial and narrative analysis to identify the mode and content of the address in these texts, we explore the ways in which adult and child reading-subjects are positioned to understand reading as work and leisure, respectively. We speculate that the narrative address to parents potentially subverts the social practices of reading and storytelling to children the texts otherwise promote. In so doing, we also address a dual audience of literacy and literature scholars.

Addressing Adults and Children

In *How Picturebooks Work*, Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott point to Colin Thompson's *Looking for Atlantis* (1994) as an exemplar of a picture book that "acknowledges a variety of levels of reading ability, sophistication, experiences of life, and the sense of humour characteristic of these levels, so that no one is excluded from feeling a part of the audience" (2001, p. 22). Explanations about the capacity of children's texts to sustain the interest of an adult audience without compromise to their appeal to the child are typically informed by the narratological distinctions between the single, double and dual address to the reader.

In an attempt to answer the question, "Is it really a children's book?" (1991, p. 1), Barbara Wall identifies three forms of address. She situates the "single address," a narrative voice that addresses children specifically and emerges in the fiction of the second half of the twentieth century, in contradistinction to the "double address." Typifying earlier children's fiction, the "double address" "exhibit[s] a strong consciousness of the presence of adult readers" (1991, p. 9). Although Wall uses the term somewhat differently to Michael Egan (1982), who coined the term. "Double address" usually refers to an address to adults in children's books that excludes the child reader. Astrid Lindgren seems to have this in mind when she comments that "Many who write for children wink slyly over the heads of their child-readers to an imaginary reader; they wink agreeingly to the adults and ignore the child" (1978, p. 12). The third form is the "dual address,"

¹ The pilot project, *Parents Reading to Children: Representations in Children's Picture Books and Parenting Materials*, was conducted by Susan Nichols, Elizabeth Bullen and Philippa Milroy, with funding from the University of South Australia and in kind support from Deakin University. The sample was randomly selected from the display shelves at four community libraries in Adelaide, South Australia, with the sole criterion that a parent (or parent figure) reading to a child or children features in the visual and/or written text of at least one spread. They were chosen on the basis of their availability in these libraries, not their publication dates.

which Wall argues is a fusion of the single and double address or an oscillation between the two. The dual address allows for “a conjunction of interests” and although it is the child narratee—and implied reader—that is addressed, “the adult reader is simultaneously satisfied” (Wall, 1991, pp. 35–36). Although rare, it is the form of narrative address that attracts most consideration in the context of children's literature research on cross-writing because it appears to accommodate developmental differences between adults and children without implying that the texts for children are less sophisticated than fiction addressing a solely adult audience.

Yet, as Nikolajeva's claims above suggest, the existence of two registers of literary and literacy sophistication, and aesthetic and artistic appreciation, remains an organising assumption of the extant research on picture books for dual audiences. These registers are often used to differentiate the dual and double address. The child reader of Anthony Browne's *Into the Forest* (2004), for example, is likely—indeed, expected—to have a prior knowledge of its fairy tale intertexts, which appear as visual metonyms: for instance, the pumpkin from “Cinderella” and Sleeping Beauty's spinning wheel. Given they are hidden within the monochromatic landscape of the forest, the adult may be a necessary co-reader, but the text addresses both audiences simultaneously and can thus be considered an example of the dual address. In contrast, the sophistication of the intertextual references in Ian Falconer's *Olivia* (2000) suggests that they are clearly for the benefit of the adult addressee, indeed, an adult with high cultural capital. The eponymous piglet protagonist makes sand castles and gets into trouble for painting on a wall, activities that may well resonate with the experiences of the implied child reader. The fact that her sandcastle takes the form of a modernist skyscraper and her painting is an interpretation of Jackson Pollock's *Autumn Rhythm # 30* may point to a conjunction of the interests of adult and child that simultaneously satisfies both. However, it is more likely that *Olivia* talks over the head of the child, and possibly some adult readers, given the unlikelihood of preschoolers recognising these cultural intertexts or adult co-readers proceeding to discuss modernism and postmodernism with the child. Class distinctions are also clearly at work here, though it is not within the scope of this paper to give them the attention they deserve.

If *Olivia* is indicative of the double address to child and adult, it is nevertheless the case that understandings of the dual address in picture books also proceed from the premise that the adult reader occupies a more knowing reader position than the child and works with the child as “co-producer” of meaning. The adult is assumed to be competent to decode and reinforce the range of knowledge and information, social codes and practices to which early childhood picture books introduce children; these books are also regarded as a genre that prepares children to become literate in visual and print communication. An organising assumption about the two audiences of this category of picture books, then, is the cognitive, developmental and experiential discrepancies between adults and children. In this context, the two registers of address set up a binarism.

As with other binary oppositions the subordinate term tends to be constructed as lack. The dominant term is under-interrogated because it is taken for granted; the emergence of whiteness and masculinity studies are examples of correctives to this tendency in studies of race and gender. Critics of children's literature routinely

assume the child reader to be subject to, or the target of, the acculturating or socialising impulses of the text, yet they frequently overlook the ideology into which the adult audience may be interpolated, even in discussions of dual and double audiences. This neglect may occur because these discussions are often undertaken in the context of the low cultural and literary status of children's fiction. Here, the role of the adult reader/critic is to "approve" the text, often in reference to the sophistication of its formal, aesthetic or narratological qualities. To the extent that the validation of children's fiction depends on adult appeal/approval, adult judgement is tacitly regarded as sound. This draws attention away from the text's ideological manipulations of the adult reader and how they might function in the service of broader social institutions that impinge upon adults as much as they do upon children.

Setting Agendas for Adults

In her chapter in Sandra Beckett's (1999) *Transcending Boundaries: Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults*, Zohar Shavit writes in the context of the aforementioned anxieties about the legitimacy of children's literature. However, in framing her essay in terms of the history of childhood, she extends the debate beyond the merits of the text to include the cultural and social roles children's fiction plays. She links the emergence of children's literature as a distinct cultural field in the eighteenth century with the cultural construction of the child as a subject "to be disciplined along the path of learning and godliness," creating a demand for children's books that "distinguished them from books for adults principally through their fundamental attachment to the educational system itself" (Shavit, 1999, p. 85). The result is a triad consisting of children's literature, childhood and children's education, which persists in spite of the ways in which each has altered over time.

Observing the centrality of childhood as an organising institution in the West that "determines adult agendas and specifies a division of labor," Shavit (1999, p. 86) explains that

Within this framework of shared labor and responsibilities, children's literature has come to occupy a special position in-the-culture. It is, in fact, this framework that authorizes children's literature and legitimizes it, even as it determines its social mandate. This mandate expects children's literature to function as one of several tools in a conglomerate of social institutions, all seeking to supply the needs of the child as understood by society at a given point in time.... The result of viewing children's literature as an agent of other systems is that each children's book must meet social expectations, determined by adults, whose social mandate is to approve or disapprove of books for children.

A clear implication here is that a text for a dual audience will reinforce broader agendas and divisions of labour, a logical extension of which is that it will position not only the child, but also the adult addressee who provides for the child's needs. However, in harnessing her research on childhood in support of an argument about

the status of children's literature, Shavit positions adults as agents—not subjects—of larger social systems and discourses. In fact, a brief examination of the discourses about childhood circulating at this historical moment (and evidence of their presence in the picture books analysed in the next section of the paper) suggests otherwise.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) point to the emergence in the 1950s and 1960s of the notion that children require special attention, and the evolution of the medical, psychiatric and educational discourses that have shaped subsequent parenting practices. The result, they argue, is that the child is now an unprecedented focus of parental work. However, it is not only the child who is subject to these pedagogical discourses: "Because childrearing is always a two-way relationship, 'science's conquest of the child' (Gstettner, 1981) is also a conquest of the mother (and less often the father)" (1995, p. 130). In this way, childhood does indeed come to "determine adult agendas and specifies a division of labour" as Shavit (1999, p. 86) argues, but also situates adults as subjects of discourses of childhood as well as agents. This may include the gendered division of labour (our sample showed almost equal numbers of fathers and mothers reading to children). More significant is the fact that, in late modernity, childrearing involves a redistribution of labour between experts and institutions (teachers, doctors, psychologists, government, etcetera) and parents. As Nichols et al. (2009, p. 65) explain, the current intensification of government-level interest in early childhood has fostered "a proliferation of both government-supported and commercially-sponsored services and products designed to assist parents in this process of taking on the identity of the 'good' parent as normalised in policy." The provision of "assistance," however, is accompanied by the devolvement of responsibility to parents, including responsibility for literacy development (see, also, Gillies, 2005; Nutbrown et al., 2005; Millei and Lee, 2007; Nichols and Jurvansuu, 2008).

The intensification of parental labours is further exacerbated by the prevailing belief that good parenting involves taking into account each and every advance in the so-called "science" of child-rearing, news of which is circulated via parenting manuals, guidebooks, magazines and newspapers (Nichols, 2000). Whereas the adult is clearly the addressee of such publications and broadcasts, assumptions about differences between the adult and child audiences of the picture book may act to obscure the role played by picture books in the "training" of parents, with the result that the pedagogic address to the adult member of the dual or double audience is overlooked. Indeed, insofar as parents understand the picture book to be a children's genre and that their role as co-reader is to guide the child in the work of textual decoding, they are more likely to concentrate on the address to the child. Even though the parent may not be the overt addressee of the picture book for preschool children, analysis of double and dual address shows that the address to the parent reflects the prevailing social and cultural beliefs about what they need to know about parenting. Or, as Nina Christensen puts it,

picture books representing adults and their behaviour construct [reading] positions for adults ... to a similar extent as they do for children ... and thus serve the function of teaching adults about the roles of children and parents. In

some cases this is done to legitimate current norms, and in others it is undertaken as a critique. (2000)

While it is not uncommon for literary picture books for children to resist or subvert social and cultural norms, not least those pertaining to gender, race, sexuality and class, it is far less common for them to do so in relation to the pedagogies of childrearing. More specifically, it is unusual for them to do so in the picture books that this paper principally focuses upon: those in which parental reading is featured as part of the everyday routine of early childhood. To the extent that such texts act to mediate between the discursive and material practices of child-rearing and readers, they are both ideological and disciplinary mechanisms (Foucault, 1977), and no less so for being child-oriented texts apparently simple in content and innocent of ideology. Indeed, the persuasiveness of such texts may be all the more compelling because the adults who read, write and produce them may not be aware or critical of the broader ideological agendas they reproduce.

Instructing Adults and Children

The promotion of parental reading to children has increased markedly in recent years. Organisations campaigning for this practice include governments, education providers, libraries, health providers and even churches, and its benefits are publicised to the parents of young children in magazines, newspapers, on radio and television. At a social level, family reading is understood to extend children's knowledge of the world and offer textual "role models." It is also represented as "quality time," a parent-child bonding activity, or as a "natural, intimate expression of parental nurturing" (Nichols, 2000, p. 326). However, as Nichols' research with parents shows, reading is also required to fulfil other roles, and is often part of the temporal and disciplinary routines of childrearing, including bedtime settling. In educational terms, it is understood to inculcate an enjoyment of reading and to facilitate the acquisition of early literacy skills. As reading to children comes to be regarded as a necessary part of making children school-ready, educational work overlaps with parenting work, with the result that parents who do not perform "proper" parenting work are seen to disadvantage their child. This suite of mutually reinforcing messages about parental reading to children is part of the broader social structures organised around childhood as an institution and these messages are reproduced in the picture books we surveyed.

Small children are quite often introduced to books and reading practices via picture books—not only the material object, but also the representations of books and reading depicted in them. In the texts we examined, depictions of books vary from simple block-like images of hardbacks with plain coloured covers and no titles, as in *The 10 Best Things About My Dad* (Loomis and Urbanovic, 2004), to images that indicate a children's genre, such as a fairy tale in *Busy, Busy Mouse* (Kroll and Kosaka, 2003) or an animal story in *Good Night* (Anholt and Anholt, 1999). Little or no information is given about the "story within the story" in these books. Reading is rarely a central thematic preoccupation of the narrative; indeed,

books and/or reading may appear in only one or two spreads, as was the case in 75% of our corpus. Notwithstanding inevitable exceptions to the rule, images of parental reading to children tend to remain peripheral even in more sophisticated narratives for this age group.

However, being incidental does not mean such images are insignificant, especially because verbal and visual information in picture books is rich with cultural connotations. As such, the significance of representation is “rarely ever limited to their literal evocation of actual objects” or persons (Nodelman, 1988, p. 10). Images of parents reading to children in picture books arguably normalise family reading, but these images are also used to construct identities for adult characters and subject-positions for adult readers. Given that parental reading is currently framed (often problematically) by discourses about literacy and school-readiness agendas (Carrington and Luke, 2003; Britto et al., 2006), the apparently incidental nature of such images is not insignificant. In picture books in which stories are read to child characters, representations of reading serve to provide information about proper parenting practices.

Catherine and Laurence Anholt's *Kids* (1998), for instance, consists of series of images with no narrative sequence; its aim is to model what children (and adults) are like. The spread entitled, “What do parents do?” is answered by a cluster of four images and the following text: “Tidy, carry, clean and cook, / Bath the baby, read a book.” More often, images of parental reading occur in picture books depicting a child's day from breakfast to bedtime, and are thus distinguished by a linear plot, often with no significant narrative complication to be resolved. They depict a daily routine that is aimed as much at the parent reader as the child recipient since they normalise the routines of “proper” childcare, including diet, exercise, rest, hygiene and discipline.

Picture books featuring parents reading to children may also depict reading as a tool for managing the work of childrearing, as in *Busy, Busy Mouse* (2003). In this particular text, the father is shown reading to his small daughter, who is seated on his lap, while the mother kneels on the floor to dress a baby. The picture is composed so that the viewer apprehends this domestic scene from above, rear side on, the eye being directed beyond the father and daughter to the mother who, like the father, is shown to be speaking. The gaze of the child and viewer is directed at the mother, not at the book. Reading, this indicates, is a way of giving attention to both children, part of a settling routine that has little to do with the way reading is presented to implied child readers through focalising characters. In *Victoria's Day* (Campos, 2007), it is clearly an essential element of settling the child to sleep, since “she only goes to sleep after Mummy reads her a story, and gives her a cuddle and lots of kisses”. This is also the case in *Time for Bed, Isobel* (Bedford and Worthington, 2008), in which reading is part of the long drawn out process of putting Isobel to bed. Referring to the narrative arc in the publisher's teaching notes, author Bedford (n.d.) writes:

In the story, Mum is not fazed by Isobel's mild and clever shenanigans—although she does become firmer eventually. A routine like this gives a child space and control, within fair boundaries set by mum or dad. Parents will

recognise it, and children will love it too, I think. For the ending, I wanted to capture a timeless moment of Mum watching Isobel in the way mothers watch their children sleeping.

As this suggests, the reading in the narrative is not an end in itself or a pleasure for its own sake for either the parent or child characters, but part of the broader pedagogy of parental work that Bedford implicitly acknowledges.

As these narratives also indicate, reading typically takes place at bedtime and coincides with the closure of the narrative. The closure of the Anholts' *Good Night*, for example, shows two small siblings choosing a story from the shelf, and on the next spread, an image of mother reading to the children in bed, accompanied by the text: "A picture book for us to share." All three characters are smiling, suggesting that reading is a pleasurable activity for the whole family. Associated with domesticity, intimacy and affection, reading is also depicted as something special that parents and children do together. The sixth best thing about the narrator's father in *The 10 Best Things About my Dad* (Loomis and Urbanovic, 2004) is reading. The left hand spread shows the boy juggling a stack of books, some of which are tumbling out of the frame. The text states "He reads me bedtime stories, sometimes nine or ten." Whereas this image conveys motion and excitement, in the facing spread, the boy is shown sitting next to his father in an easy chair. The text reads, "He NEVER argues when I say, 'Please read that one AGAIN!'" The image shows the child affectionately touching his father's face. Being read to by a parent, this implies, is an expression of love and invokes love from the child in return. Of course, if loving parents read to their children, the disciplinary subtext implies that those who do not do so may be lacking. The visual narrative accompanying the text adds a further layer of meaning clearly addressed to the adult. For, whereas the child is smiling at his father in both spreads, the father covers his mouth in mock horror at the sight of the stack of books in the first, and in the second his gaze is directed out of the image towards the implied (adult) reader, to whom he gives a knowing look. The implication is that when it comes to reading, indulging the child is part of a bigger literacy picture, a point also made in Bradman and de Lacey's *Night, Night, Ben* (1993).

The importance of promoting the child's interest in books and reading is even more overt in Rachel Flynn and Craig Smith's *My Daddy and Me* (1998). Again the image of parental bedtime reading is part of the daily routine and an occasion for bonding between parent and child. The image shows a child tucked up in bed and the father sitting on the side of the bed with a book in his hand, held away from his body. The mother is lying on her child's bed, listening too. The question, "Does your daddy tell stories?" may be explicitly addressed to the child reader, but it is implicitly directed at the adult. A coded encouragement to fathers to read, it also invokes the gendered division of labour childhood underpins, encouraging as it does a shared approach to parenting. However, since reading to children in these picture books appears as one of the multitude of tasks to be completed in the course of daily child-rearing, there is an important difference, if not a fundamental contradiction, in the way in which reading is represented to the dual audience of children and adults.

Reading is typically represented to the child audience as a source of pleasure and associated with rest, leisure, and empowerment. By contrast, the verbal and pictorial

address to adult readers frequently constructs reading to their children as an educational imperative or as work. In *Consuming Children: Education, Entertainment, Advertising* (2001), Jane Kenway and Elizabeth Bullen point to adult preferences for children's entertainment to be educational. Children's "Goods and entertainment are sold to parents," they argue, "for their instrumental, cognitive, and motivational value in the child's educational development—as Block (1997, p. 154) says, 'fun with a purpose'" (2001, p. 82). The same might be said of parental reading to children, except that what is fun for the child is also work for the parent, and tiring work at that.

In the Anholts' *Kids*, the image accompanying the text, "Bath the baby, read a book," shows the child awake in bed and her mother sitting in a chair close by, book in lap and fast asleep. Reading in Falconer's *Olivia* is also a bedtime activity. It follows bath and dinner, but the text constructs a more nuanced narrative sequence than is typical in daily routine picture books. Three spreads deal directly with reading and a fourth with its consequences. In the first, Olivia appears carrying a stack of books and tells her mother, "Only five books tonight, Mummy." In the second, mother and daughter negotiate the actual number. Mother wants one only and after some to-ing and fro-ing they settle on three books. In fact, it is not uncommon for picture books to position the focalising child character as the person that wants to read more, not less, than the parent.² In a textbook case of reverse psychology, the child is positioned to see reading as desirable. The third page shows Olivia and her mother in bed reading a book about Maria Callas. When they have finished reading, Olivia's mother gives her a kiss and says, "You know, you really wear me out. But I love you anyway." And Olivia gives her a kiss back and says, "I love you too!"

Of course, "Working on behalf of a child is not just any kind of work but special; work and love are inextricably bound together, and the greater the love the more work seems acceptable" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, p. 131). The selection of picture books surveyed in this article likewise equates reading to children with love for both adult and child reader. Labours of love are labour nonetheless, as the tussle over books and bedtime in *Olivia*, *Moonlight* (Ormerod, 2004) and *Time for bed*, *Isobel* suggests. Although neither the linguistic nor pictorial text in *Olivia* explicitly links the mother's exhaustion with reading, the final spread in this sequence is clearly a nod of acknowledgement from the implied author to the implied adult reader, who is assumed to be a worn-out parent also. In this respect, the dual address in these picture books creates a tension between reading as leisure and work and, thus, a potential ambivalence about the pleasures of reading.

Conclusion

In many ways, the piglet Olivia is the ideal child subject produced by the contemporary science of childrearing. Reading is situated as one of a range of activities linked to the narrative construction of her identity as a confident, culturally

² In our sample, texts in which the child initiated reading outnumbered those in which the parent did so. However, in 58% of cases, the initiator was not stated and reading was implicitly part of a routine.

sophisticated high-achiever of 4 or 5 years old. As the opening spread states, “Olivia is good at a lot of things.” What is quite unusual in a picture book directed at this age group is that *Olivia* seeks to convey the connection between reading and knowledge, and the consumption of cultural texts, dreams and identity formation. However, when the text’s precocious main protagonist emulates Pollock, Degas and Callas, she also points to the importance of adults as role models. This raises questions about parents as role models, and the contradictory reading positions offered to adults and children in picture books figuring reading to children as parental labour.

The picture books depicting parents reading to their children that we have discussed address adult and child differently; however, we suggest that the discourses about work and leisure are not mutually exclusive, but dialectical insofar as they exist in conflict with each other. On the one hand, this interplay accommodates its own contradictions since the readers and recipients (actual, implied and fictive) are positioned to seek the same pedagogical end or share a conjunction of interest in reading. On the other hand, and precisely because the interaction between parent and child is central to the pedagogies aimed at each, the boundary between these respective addresses is necessarily thin, potentially making the adult perspective on reading available to the child also. This is the more likely given the fact that actual readers are performing elements of the very practices about which they are reading. As Nichols’ (2000) research with parents found, family literacy practices are often far more “work-intensive,” and often less pleasurable, than indicated in these picture books or, indeed, media and public health parenting materials encouraging family literacy practices.

The work-leisure contradiction we have identified has implications for both early literacy and family literacy education. At the same time as the pedagogic address to the adult reproduces the family literacy practices endorsed in parenting material, the underlying message that it is work introduces an ambivalence, potentially undermining social agendas about the importance of, and pleasure derived from, reading. This has implications for child readers, too, since the notion of reading as work is arguably reiterated in school settings, where the labour involved is further complicated by differences in the pedagogic and power relationship between parent–child and teacher–pupil, and the transition from reading as a social activity to an ultimately solitary one. The reading event is no longer associated with leisure, affection or bonding. In fact, we noted this shift in the symbolic function of reading in picture books for older readers, finding images of parents reading newspapers to be a recurring trope of parent–child alienation, as for example, in Anthony Browne’s *Through the Magic Mirror* (2000) and *Gorilla* (2008), and Gleeson and Greder’s *An Ordinary Day* (2001). Contradictory messages about reading in the pedagogical address to parents and children in the picture books discussed in this article, and indeed, the shift in the tenor of these messages in picture books for preschool and school-age children, arguably undermine the very reading practices they ostensibly endorse. We suggest that the textual representation of reading in children’s books should not be overlooked as a factor in family and early literacy research. We also suggest that theories of reader address have a role to play as

analytical tools for interrogating the social agendas into which both adults and children are interpolated in texts for dual audiences.

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