

creations, thus changing what we consider organic life. Mallen discusses the notion of ‘posthuman’ and its meaning as an extension or condition of the human – a term that has a long history in describing hybrid characters. The author continues a rich discussion of texts that, in Mallen’s words, “carry both warning and celebration” (166), such as considerations of how technological innovations contribute new forms of knowledge production and the prediction of technological advances in children’s literature: “... science and children’s fiction open up a new theoretical space to explore questions about life, death, and what matters as considerations of our posthuman existence” (11).

Each chapter of *Contemporary Children’s Literature and Film: Engaging with Theory*, creates interest in the complexities raised, as well as invites questions and, perhaps, concerns. Each also ends with possible further readings to extend the authors’ well crafted discussions. “Does theory matter any longer?” is a question asked at the beginning of this book. The authors have created a collection of compelling perspectives that collaboratively and strongly respond “yes” to the power of using theory to unveil the layers of meaning, purposeful voices, and intentional contexts in global literature for young readers. The chapters offered here support the role of theory in our daily involvements as scholars, teachers, and readers of children’s literature as well as inform about topics, questions and concerns across areas of inquiry within the larger field of children’s literature.

Janelle B. Mathis

## A Head Start with Books for Real Beginners

**Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, ed. 2011. *Emergent Literacy: Children’s Books from 0 to 3*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 275 pp. ISBN 978-90-272-1808-7.**

With a few introductory question teasers, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer sets the topic perimeters of the general subject of this book “at the heart of emergent literacy studies” (1). Readers are prompted to expect descriptions of not only children’s first encounters with picturebooks and early book behaviour, but also of the mental processes behind them.

As the editor states, “studies in emergent literacy research dealing with the impact of picturebooks on children under three are extremely rare” (*ibid.*). She offers valid reasons for the lack of interest in the field in question, but underlines the importance of emergent literacy and books for children under three. This is implied in all chapters, regardless of the fact they are written by different authors. By the end of the book, arguments given in various chapters persuade the reader that there can be no valid literacy research or any suitable claim in the fields of language acquisition, literacy studies or cognitive studies without first understanding emergent literacy.

This book is the result of the first conference focused on multidisciplinary approaches to emergent literacy. It successfully manages to maintain the benefits of the combined disciplines, each of them largely contributing to the true value and wide scope of the book.

Its appeal lies precisely in presenting such a broad range of contributors' expertise, from a neurobiologist, former teachers, to scholars researching picturebooks, emergent literacy, reader-response theory and some relevant issues in the field of linguistics.

In the introductory chapter, Kümmerling-Meibauer defines the basic terms. She also explains the difficulties in describing and categorising children's first picturebooks objectively. At the same time, basic cognitive and psychological facts concerning language acquisition and the understanding of narratives are always at hand and are clearly explained.

The following thirteen chapters are grouped into three parts according to the subject matter. Part I deals with the premises of early literacy, Part II presents research into specific kinds of picturebooks and their features, including studies of individual books, and Part III focuses on child-book interaction.

Part I tackles children's ability to comprehend and construct texts, the development of colour perception in children, and picturebook design. These issues are discussed by Lesley Lancaster, an expert in children's early symbolic learning and writing in early childhood, by the neurobiologist Annette Werner, and by the media theory expert Martin Roman Deppner, respectively.

Part II consists of six chapters, offering a meticulous insight into research of a wide range of picturebooks for children under three. Some chapters focus on specific picturebook forms. For instance, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Jörg Meibauer explain the value of early-concept books in children's psychological and cognitive development, including linguistic aspects and language acquisition. Cornelia Rémi presents the description, definition and history of 'wimmelbooks' and focuses on the abundance of material they offer. Through comparison with other kinds of picturebooks, Rémi points out the playfulness and variety of reading options as the distinct features of wimmelbooks.

The final chapter in Part II is dedicated to Japanese toilet training picturebooks. Kyoto Takashi and Douglas Wilkerson explain the huge publishing success of picturebooks dealing with bodily functions, focused on health and educational values. The authors also examine the literary and cultural implications of the translation of such picturebooks into English.

Chapters 5 and 8 revolve around the fact that picturebooks are mostly read by caregivers to children. Kathleen Ahrens, an expert in issues dealing with meaning and metaphor, suggests criteria for selecting picturebooks with narrative texts. She also points out the benefits of reading to infants and toddlers and promotes reading to children in general. Marie Luise Rau provides a rich collection of picturebooks for ages 0 to 3 that include metaphors, and relies on the conceptual metaphor theory to describe pictorial and textual metaphors in the analysed picturebooks, as well as their relationships.

Carole Scott explains the early development of visual, musical and language literacy in young children in the chapter "Early impressions: paths to literacy". Through a detailed analysis of six well-known picturebooks, the author explores "their ability to stimulate the physical and cognitive processes involved in the acquisition of visual, musical and language literacies" (161).

Part III brings a number of case studies regarding child-book interactions. Kerstin Nachtigäller and Katharina J. Rohlfing contribute a study of the caregiver's scaffolding of meaningful perception. Special focus is placed on maternal discourse behaviour. This chapter is very useful to any researcher of children's literature, particularly in terms of applied methodology, as it is an appropriate and useful mixture of qualitative and quantitative research techniques, which may serve as an exemplary procedure for similar research in the future.

Virginia Lowe offers valuable insights into the development of a variety of skills in young children, from book handling and picture recognition to knowledge of print and reading. Her paper is based on a longitudinal observation of two children from birth to their third birthday in contact with books. In the next chapter, Janet Evans focuses on three- and four-year-olds and their interactions with picturebooks when they are being read aloud to. She argues that reading aloud to children leads them to deeper exploration and understanding of literacy. In her research, she also found that children developed a sense of self as a result of their reading experience, which was demonstrated through bookmaking activities.

The final chapter is based on a mother's diary and observations of her daughters from birth to the ages of three and six. The mother, Evelyn Arizpe, in cooperation with Jane Blatt, used the collected data to explore picturebooks as a tool for supporting the emotional development of bilingual children.

The book combines historical, social, linguistic and psychological data, but it is still easy to read and understand. It also presents the most recent and important findings related to relevant theories in children's literature research, revisiting them in the context of reading picturebooks for very young children. Further, the book offers new and relevant qualitative and quantitative research methods appropriate for picturebook research related to very small children.

An extensive list of references is found at the end of every chapter, including a separate list of the children's books cited. The book ends with brief notes on the editor and contributors, followed by a particularly useful index of topics, names, picturebook authors and picturebooks addressed in individual studies.

The book is indispensable reading for all scholars interested in emergent literacy and picturebooks for very young children, but it is also appealing and useful to other audiences. Most chapters are written with a diverse public in mind. While Part I, "Premises of early literacy", is undoubtedly aimed at researchers in the field of emergent literacy, Part II will be equally interesting to academics and to more general readers, including parents, caregivers and kindergarten teachers who deal with slightly older age groups; in addition to a thorough insight into research of picturebooks for children under three, this part also includes practical suggestions for reading and selecting picturebooks. Both the introductory chapter by Kümmerling-Meibauer, which presents a comprehensive and yet concise overview of emergent literacy research, and Part III, which brings a number of case studies, can be particularly useful to students taking their first steps in the field.

This book offers an original and needed contribution to the emergent literacy field. It clearly explains various aspects of emergent literacy in relation to picturebooks, and it offers a valuable overview of picturebooks for very young children. It seems likely that this book will become a fundamental reference for all future research in the above-mentioned fields.

*Ivana Milković*

## Picturebooks for Children and Adults Alike

**Beckett, Sandra L. 2012. *Crossover Picturebooks: A Genre for All Ages*. New York and London: Routledge. xvi+398 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-87230-0**

What a delight to be able to review such a wonderful book. Sandra Beckett's enthusiasm for picturebooks oozes through her competent analysis of visual narratives from around the world. This enables her to put forward a case for "Picturebooks as a crossover genre" – the title of her first chapter.

*Crossover Picturebooks*, a follow-up to Beckett's earlier publication *Crossover Fiction* (Routledge 2009), seeks to address what Beckett feels is "the neglect of a genre that deserves special attention within the widespread and ever expanding global trend of crossover literature" (1). She suggests that because picturebooks offer a unique opportunity for collaborative reading between children and adults, they empower the two audiences more equally than any other narrative form. She is, however, very much aware that picturebooks have been considered the prerogative of young children and is sure that it will take much persuasion to destroy this image – possibly more rapidly in some countries than others. She cites contemporary picturebooks globally, especially those from countries like Norway where picturebooks are considered 'all-age literature'. Alongside this she looks at earlier authors who have been thinking along the same lines for some time. Maurice Sendak, for example; who believes that we have created an arbitrary division between adult and children's books; Lewis Carroll who didn't set out to write for children; or François Ruy-Vidal who was often reproached for writing books for adults rather than children and is renowned for saying that "there is no literature for children, there is literature" (5). Where Beckett is at her best, however, is when she delights in talking about French writers, illustrators and publishers. Her knowledge in this area is second to none and she is able not only to quote and discuss relevant picturebooks, but also give insights into the histories of many authors, as well as the publishing houses. She tells us, for example, that the French author and publisher, Christian Bruel felt that to make books for children is an error; it is more appropriate to make books that can be put into children's hands. She also mentions several other European publishers who support her argument and a number in Latin America, Canada and the United States, too.

In Chapter Two, Beckett suggests that some of the most innovative crossover picturebooks have been called 'artists' books', and she challenges not only the boundaries