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## The Accordion Format in the Design of Children's Books: A Close Reading of a Portuguese Collection<sup>1</sup>

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This text aims to analyse accordion books in general and more specifically the collection of four accordion picturebooks titled “Desconcertina” [“Disconcerting”], published in Portugal between 2011 and 2015 by the designer André Letria. This article is divided into five parts and deals with a particular type of book object, namely accordion books. It starts by explaining the general format of an accordion picturebook and then goes on to discuss a selection of contemporary accordion picturebooks published between 2009 and 2016 in Europe and around the world. Finally, it presents a close reading of a Portuguese collection of accordion picturebooks by André Letria and discusses the importance of the materiality of accordion books in the promotion of interactivity in the reading process, challenging the readers' competences.

**Keywords:** accordion book, book design, format, interactive reading, materiality, Portugal

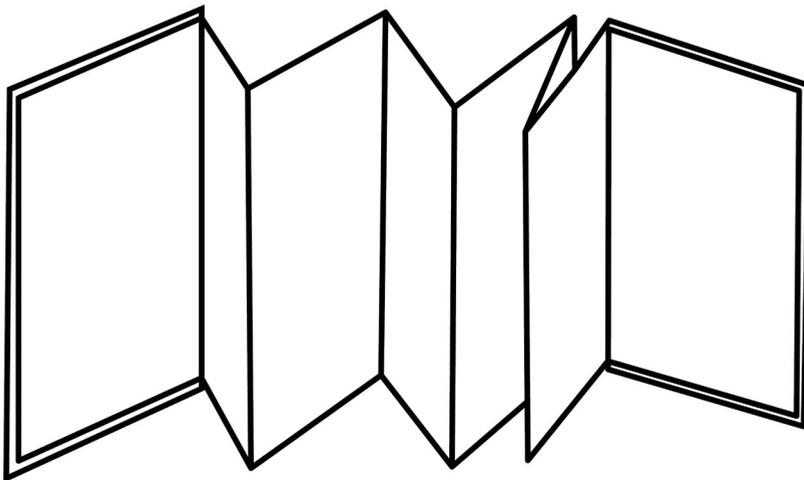
The idea behind accordion books is to exploit their unique binding and the multiple ways the books can be read so as to stimulate a special physical and cognitive interaction with readers of all ages. The very fact that this book format appears in publication indicates the creative potentialities of accordion books as a viable option for children's books. Challenging readers of various ages, requiring physical manipulation and interaction, accordion picturebooks draw attention to the format of the book itself and demand the reader's interpretation. This study aims to characterize accordion books by explaining their general format with a specific look at a selection of contemporary

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accordion picturebooks published between 2009 and 2016 in Europe and around the world. The central part of the study is a close reading of a Portuguese collection of four<sup>2</sup> accordion picturebooks titled *Desconcertina* [Disconcerting], published in Portugal between 2011 and 2015 by the designer André Letria.

Despite the fact that picturebooks have been widely discussed, their material/structural aspect seems to be relatively rarely analysed by scholars, an aspect this paper aims to address. The accordion picturebook<sup>3</sup> challenges the traditional codex and its fixed way of reading. The accordion or concertina format is characterized by a long strip of paper that highlights the materiality of the book design and the visual relationship of the sequence of images that are sometimes compared to a mural, a fresco or a frieze. However, when it is folded, the accordion picturebook (Fig. 1) takes the form of a more conventional book, especially when it uses a double-page-spread composition. Sandra L. Beckett states that “[a]lthough these books can be read as doublespreads, either from left to right or back to front, they can also stand, allowing all the pages to be viewed simultaneously” (2012: 66). Keith Smith uses the term “fold book” to refer to accordion books and distinguishes between “fold book as an implied cycle” and “fold book as literally cycle” (Smith 2000: 63), since this format, unlike the traditional codex binding, lends itself to expressing and reinforcing cyclical motifs and ideas.

### The accordion-picturebook format



**Fig. 1.** Traditional accordion-book structure  
**Sl. 1.** Struktura tradicionalne leporelo-slikovnice

<sup>2</sup> The four wordless accordion picturebooks are *Incómodo* [Nuisance] (2011), *Destino* [Destiny] (2011), *Partida* [Departure] (2015), and *Outono* [Autumn] (2015).

<sup>3</sup> Other designations, such as concertina books, *leporello*, imageries or folded stories can also be found.

First appearing in China and Japan centuries ago (Breede and Jason 2007), as well as in the Mayan and Aztec cultures, the accordion format predates the codex. Despite being one of the oldest forms of books, contemporary book authors and designers such as Katsumi Komagata, Enzo Mari, Kveta Pacovska, and Warja Lavater have explored the accordion book anew due to its unconventional format and the potentialities regarding the expression of movement, the passage of time, and sequencing created by the unfolding process. In the case of movement, the accordion book is similar to a roll of film as images flow seamlessly through the narrative and create the dramatic impact that is unique to the materiality of this type of book. The suggestion of fluidity is inherent to the unfolding process of the accordion book, creating a sense of continuity and sequence that is generally disrupted by turning pages in traditional books. The four accordion books that will be discussed here convey a sense of “real” time in “real” space. They do this by using images that seemingly look alike, asking for a close and attentive observation of the sequence of images that slows the reader down in order to observe the images attentively and discover the emergence of an action or subtler changes. Smith also confirms this idea, declaring that “timing is controlled in a series and sequence by orchestrated movement” (Smith 2003: 145) and is related to the graphic layout of the book.

The format of accordion books sets them apart, and though Beckett (2012) categorizes them under picturebooks, she designates a section specifically for them. Defined by their special folding process, which allows fluidity in the development of the narrative and establishes a relationship between the accordion format and the frieze presentation of accordion books, she stresses that “accordion books question the codex”, although they “can be read in a conventional manner” (Beckett 2014: 62).

Mention of the accordion-picturebook format can also be found in studies about “artistic books” or “wordless picturebooks” (Bosch 2014), since they present similarities with those categories. Other areas of study that concentrate on accordion picturebooks include book design (Walton Gallery and University of Wisconsin 2009; Romani 2011; Kaiser 2015) and their pedagogical use with children. Because of the simplicity of these books, as well as their educational and creative potential, they are easy to make and allow children to create their narrative and participate in storytelling. Due to the popularity of artisanal handmade books together with increased interest in this format for children, the accordion book is experiencing a renaissance (Brown and Towell 2015).

Though the accordion-book format may seem simplistic, it does allow for different interpretations and can result in a wide range of manifestations. The book can have pages that fold in a horizontal, vertical, or even circular way; hard or paperback covers; print on one or both sides, depending mainly on the creativity and imagination of the author and the possibilities of the materials used.

Kimberley Reynolds (2010) refers to accordion books as an example of a book format that reinforces its materiality through its architecture and structure. She pays particular attention to the playful dimension of these books and notes that graphic

designers frequently favour them when they want to underline the relationship between content and form. The book format invites this playfulness a direct result of its experimental approaches, allowing for the exploration of size, orientation, type of paper, cut-outs, printing, and colours.

The theoretical approaches that examine the physical properties of book as objects (Haining 1979; Diehn 1999; Carter and Díaz 1999), including accordion books, underline the importance of materiality, such as the process in which the introduction of elements and objects allow for manipulation and physical interaction and movement, as well as changes in the traditional process of reading (and moving the pages). These studies also outline the history<sup>4</sup> of this particular publication format, producing examples of ancient texts conceived as book objects with different purposes and target audiences. However, the most relevant examples of the impact of the materiality of books date back to the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, where innovations, especially in movable books, are quite unique (Reid-Walsh 2016). Reynolds states that (2010: 156):

[...] the vogue for harlequinades, movable books, and toy theatres (traditionally regarded as part of the children's publishing industry) began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when publishers started to experiment with ways of creating the illusions of movement and/or transformation in books.

Hannah Field (2013) underlines the implications of the materiality of books in the reading process, understood as a mental and cognitive activity but also a physical (and sensorial) one. The typology of these book objects creates difficulties regarding the difference between children's books and artists' books (Scott 2014), and also between books and toys (Reid-Walsh 2012), because the distinctions are made mainly based on functional and design features, materials and technology.

Sandra Beckett (2012) underlines the investment made in the book's physical dimension, seen as a specific and three-dimensional object. In the category of book objects, it is possible to find experimental and artistic publications with a bold graphic design, for example the works by authors such as Bruno Munari, Enzo Mari, Warja Lavater, or Katsumi Komagata, as well as toy books, board books, game books, wordless picturebooks, picturebooks with holes or cut-outs i.e. die cuts, sculpture books, accordion books, foldable books, or books containing objects. The divisions between the different types of books are not always clear, not only due to the hybridism of the range of types available, including features from other categories, but also as a consequence of an excessive specification of the typologies themselves.

The accordion book format, for instance, is so flexible it is difficult to definitively categorise. It can take the form of a continuum, allowing the narrative to loop back on

<sup>4</sup> There are, nevertheless, affinities with other kind of books, such as Muraqqa albums. They consist of albums in book form containing miniature Islamic paintings that can be found in several Arabic countries and cultures. According to *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, "Golšan album" (*Moraqqa '-e golšan*) is a "sumptuous 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup>-century album of paintings, drawings, calligraphy, and engravings by Mughal, Persian, Deccani, Turkish, and European artists in the Golestān Palace Library" (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2001, Vol. XI, Fasc. 1, pp. 104). For more information, go to <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/golsan-album>>.

itself in a circular structure. In some cases, though a story is printed on both the front and the back, the narratives are independent, and therefore it is possible to distinguish the two stories of the accordion book from each other (with two separate or parallel stories). In other cases, the panorama format is designed in such a way that the page can be folded and appears as a traditional page-by-page book without spoiling the story, allowing the reader to choose how he/she interacts with the book. Adding another element to the action of the reading process is the common use of slipcases, envelopes, or small boxes, a kind of physical protection that highlights the materiality of this specific format because, unlike other books, the reader must take the accordion book out of its covering.

Accordion books can also be cut<sup>5</sup> to represent different forms and shapes, which function as visual sculptures,<sup>6</sup> or can simply maintain the traditional rectangle. The physical dimensions of accordion books also vary, since they range from quite small books (such as the collection analysed) to very large ones. Regardless of their size, the majority of publications are designed to stand up, allowing the reader to move around the book. The accordion format can also include devices from other types of books, such as pop-ups, flaps, holes or even tissue, that underline the hybridism of this type of book. In some ways, the accordion book, or “oriental fold book” according to Keith Smith (2003),<sup>7</sup> can function as an umbrella term for related formats that explore the same kind of mechanical “binding” that results from the folding of a long sheet of paper alternately back and forth on itself.

Despite the complexity and various artistic approaches, by altering the traditional physical interaction between the reader and the book, accordion books can be enjoyed by the very young while still providing enough challenging reading opportunities to interest older children and adults. Characterized by their playfulness (related to the subversion of the book format) and/or by their aesthetic qualities, accordion books challenge the traditional reading process by promoting new kinds of manipulation of the book in order to discover the relationship between content and format and the implications of structure in the construction of the book and its message(s). The interpretation is the result of several activities, including the exploration of each page, but also the complete image resulting from following that specific sequence.

## The diversity of contemporary accordion picturebooks

In response to e-books and digital reading, the materiality of picturebooks, such as accordion books, has become increasingly more important in publishing books in

<sup>5</sup> The cut-outs can be placed in the centre of the page or at the outer edges or both.

<sup>6</sup> Tullet's *The Game of Sculpture* (2012), for instance, combines the accordion format with cut-outs and shapes that can be added and combined, changing accordingly to the reader's desire. In the case of this book, the use of light during the reading process can also create shadows and new forms, enlarging the creative potential of the object.

<sup>7</sup> This author identifies four types of books: “a western codex, an oriental fold book, a fan, or a Venetian blind” (Smith 2003: 20).

the last few years. Much like the children's books by such relevant artists as Munari or Lavater, accordion books can be found in different creative fields and aimed at different age groups, proving that this particular format is not exclusive to children's literature or art books but is becoming more popular, complex and diverse.

In Spain, a fine example of a complex crossover accordion book is the Galician wordless book *Balea* [Whale] by Federico Fernández, writer and illustrator of the book, and Germán González, who was responsible for the addition of colour. One side of the book represents the exterior of a machine that looks like a whale, and the other side shows the interior of the whale (as a sort of giant submarine). Through Fernández's use of minute details and parallel stories, Isabel Mociño (2017) has analysed in detail how this accordion book presents an endless opportunity for discovering stories and characters hidden within the images.

In England, a new version of the classic *The Snowman* by Raymond Briggs (2014) was also published in an accordion format. This volume, which includes pop-ups, takes advantage of the movement suggested by the process of unfolding and is sold in a box that contributes to the act of folding and unfolding but also functions as protective cover.

In Belgium, Guido Van Genetchen is the author of a collection of four wordless folding books<sup>8</sup> that are aimed at very young readers and deal with the relationship between content and form. Van Genetchen combines various parts or elements of different animals in order to surprise the reader as the story unfolds.

Another fine example of an accordion book comes from Poland. *Książę w cukierni* [A Prince in a Pastry Shop], written by Marek Bieńczyk and illustrated by Joanna Concejo (2013), won the Polish IBBY award in 2013. This 92-page hardcover book is repeatedly compared to a masterpiece or a work of art due to the illustrations and format options. Published in a format of 140 x 325 mm that can be laid flat to form a 6.5-meter-long mural, this accordion book allows for both a more traditional page-by-page reading, as well as a frieze-like layout, fully taking advantage of the accordion format in both incarnations.

In Portugal, publishing house Bruaá printed an accordion book by André da Loba (2010), an illustrator and a graphic designer. His visual and graphic adaptations of Charles Cros's text *O Arenque Fumado* [The Smoked Herring] (1872/1873) unfolds into the shape of a somewhat odd-looking fish (Fig. 2). In *Elefante em loja de porcelanas* [An Elephant in a China Shop], written by Adélia Carvalho (2012), and published by Tcharan, da Loba draws a sequential narrative (Fig. 3), the back of which has been left as simple outline drawings so that children may colour in the figures and so become involved with the book. Both books, however, can function conventionally as a codex, allowing for a page-by-page reading, and unconventionally as a mural book that can easily stand on its own.

<sup>8</sup> The four books are: *Un gato?* [A cat?] (2008), *Un ratón?* [A mouse?] (2008), *Un caracol?* [A snail?] (2008), and *Una rana?* [A frog] (2008).



**Fig. 2.** *O Arenque Fumado* [The Smoked Herring]  
**Sl. 2.** *O Arenque Fumado* [Dimljena haringa]



**Fig. 3.** *Elefante em loja de porcelanas* [Elephant in a China Shop]  
**Sl. 3.** *Elefante em loja de porcelanas* [Slon u trgovini porculana]

These two titles created by André da Loba differ from the other books analysed here by virtue of the fact that the front and the back sides of his accordion books are separate stories. Instead of continuing the narrative on the back cover of the mural, as Letria does in his above-mentioned books, each side of André da Loba's murals is a complete story.

In the works of Clémentine Sourdis one sees the use of cut-outs in accordion books, and Emma Giuliani proves even the addition of flaps is possible. Sourdis adapted Perrault's classics such as *Le Petit Chaperon rouge* [Little Red Riding Hood] (2012), *Le Chat botté* [Puss in Boots] (2013), and *La Barbe bleue* [Blue Beard] (2014) to fit the accordion format, and Giuliani won the Opera Prima Bologna Award in 2014 with the book *Voir le jour* [Welcome the Day] (2013), a highly original work that combined pop-ups and origami in an accordion-book structure.

The accordion-book production is not exclusive to Europe but it is used as a format in varied geographies by creators such as the Indian authors Moyna Chitrakar and Joydeb Chitrakar (*Tsunami*, 2009), the Mexican authors José Manuel Mateo and Javier Martínez Pedro (*Migrar* [To migrate], 2011), the British author Tom Clohosy Cole (*Space Race*, 2012), the North American author (of Mexican heritage) Lois Lora (*Eventually Everything Connects*, 2015), and the Spanish author Isidro Ferrer (*Un jardín* [A Garden], 2016). By utilizing the various creative potentialities of the accordion format, they all take equal part in playing with the vast possibilities this format affords in order to construct a visual narrative, even if the reading directionality differs, the shapes vary, and words are optional. The Brazilian accordion book *Ismália* (2006) is another interesting example. Based on a poem by Alphonsus de Guimaraens, a symbolist poet who lived at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and created by Odilon Moraes, a contemporary illustrator and graphic designer, this accordion-book version of the poem proposes a vertical reading, unfolding from top to bottom. The book, in accordance with the poem's poetic suggestion, is divided between the sky (on top) and the sea (at the bottom), and it is these two elements that dominate *Ismália*'s attention (and that domination condemns *Ismália* to madness and to suicide in the end). Moraes pays tribute to the subject matter and uses a very restrained palette of colours that is in perfect harmony with the poetic tone of the text.

In another solemn work, Joe Sacco produced *The Great War* (2013), a twenty-four-foot-long panorama that illustrates the first day of the Battle of the Somme. By configuring an exclusively visual frieze without any text, the book depicts scenes of trench warfare, including no-man's-land, wounded soldiers retreating, and the dead being buried *en masse*. The reader can easily discern the stories in this visual presentation of the historical event and thus witness the suffering, fighting, heroism, and the military strategy that took place.

Each book that has been briefly discussed here presents various narratives and a variety of strategies utilized in synthesizing the accordion format's affordances, which leads to a special case that will be analysed in the next section.

### The “concertina” collection by André Letria

André Letria, a prize-winning illustrator and a Portuguese graphic designer, published a collection of four accordion picturebooks between 2011 and 2015 (Fig. 4). A close perusal of the collection allows the identification of the characteristics and potentials of this specific format. The four wordless accordion picturebooks under analysis are *Incómodo* [Nuisance] (2011), *Destino* [Destiny] (2011), *Partida* [Departure] (2015), and *Outono* [Autumn] (2015). This collection illustrates a more personal and a more artisanal approach to the accordion-book format, and the smaller size of the books pushes the author to strip down the visual elements used to tell the story, making it more contained and simplistic. These books are minimalistic and tiny (11 × 15 cm), but they are powerful despite the limited number of pictures, the absence of text, and the use of a basic colour palette.



**Fig. 4.** André Letria's collection (slipcases)  
**Sl. 4.** Niz slikovnica Andréa Letrije (navlake za slikovnice)

In the case of André Letria's collection, each of the four books comes in its own envelope-like paper slipcase, which not only protects the fragile accordion book (it has no soft or hard cover), but also provides the title and all the indispensable information, such as the ISBN, the barcode, the publishing house and the date.

The collection titled *Desconcertina* [Disconcerting] simultaneously plays with the format of the books (concertina) and the content. The surprising and unpredictable<sup>9</sup> endings of the four visual narratives require the readers to interpret the scenes and draw their own conclusions. These small wordless books can be unfolded to create a series of 12 pictures (6 on each side) that tell a sequential visual narrative. Though the books seem to be following a linear storyline, the last few scenes introduce a surprising twist in the tale, dramatically altering the anticipated outcome. The fantastic (*Autumn*), satirical (*Destiny*) or parodic (*Nuisance*) twists can result in humour because the sudden interruption to a repetitive sequence of images can cause shocked laughter. By using only two or three basic colours, a different colour scheme for each book, the collection explores the economy of visual resources as well as the expressive potentialities of the unpretentious and comprehensible illustration technique. As such, the story relies largely on the materiality and the format-related elements of the book.

This collection of books presents an example of narration through fixed and printed sequential images that are united by the book's structure (Bosch 2014), allowing for a continuous reading. The first book, *Nuisance*, tells the story of an annoying fly that won't stop flying and buzzing around a man, from left to right and right to left, in a straight line, in circles, and up and down. However, towards the end of the story, a frog appears and this introduces the expectation that he will eat the annoying fly. Then something unexpected happens because, surprisingly, the frog eats the man instead of the fly, turning the narrative upside down and provoking laughter with the absurdity of this twist. The second story, *Destiny*, is about a man who looks up at the sky and

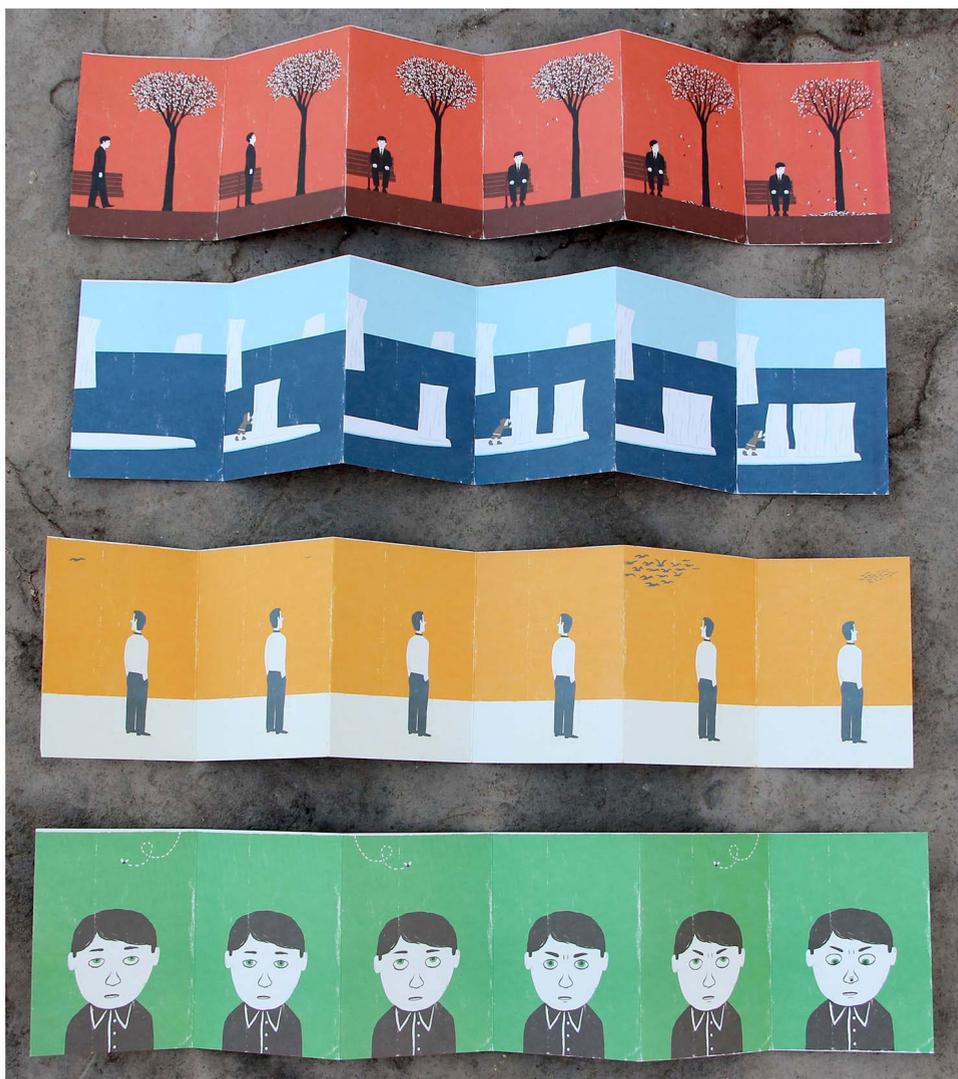
<sup>9</sup> In Portuguese, the word "desconcertante" "disconcerting" sounds similar to *Desconcertina* and the author plays with this particular phonetic similarity.

at the birds and contemplates his life (destiny). By the end of the book, the man is flying, having discarded his clothes in a pile on the ground. In the final scene, the man's resemblance to an angel and his ascension are powerfully depicted and can be understood as a metaphorical change representing life and death. In *Departure* (Fig. 5), the main character wants to see the world. When he reaches what seems like the ultimate obstacle in the form of a large body of water, he is undeterred and builds a boat made of snow and continues his journey, setting out on a new path. Finally, in *Autumn* (Fig. 5), a man is sitting on a garden bench while leaves fall off a tree, marking the passage of time. In the end, when the tree has lost all its leaves, the man loses his head, which can be interpreted either literally or in a symbolic way. To lose your head means to lose control, go mad, or become furious, but the man seems relaxed and calm throughout the story. Nevertheless, as he contemplates the falling leaves, a part of him is also falling, in resonance with or in a symbiotic relationship with nature and the environment. Metaphorically, *Autumn* can also be an expression of a feeling or a state of mind in the circle of human life.

The unusual endings of these books may be considered disturbing or unsettling to some extent, not only because there is a twist in each of them, but also because it is left open to interpretation and leaves one uncomfortably wondering what meaning should be drawn from the final scene. Because this specific collection has elements that draw attention to the line between life and death, it attracts a wider target audience, appealing to children and parents alike.

So while these picturebooks have been distributed by a publisher of children's literature and illustrated by a very well-known illustrator of children's books, they do not exhibit the bright colours normally associated with children's books. In fact, Letria employs a palette of subdued colours, and each book is monochromatic, either in cold or warm tones, giving the books a sense of visual restraint. The four books are bound together into a cohesive collection, connected by their format, the illustration techniques used and the single-word titles (nouns). Another characteristic all four books share is the parallel organization of each narrative with each page seeing a repetition of the visual elements. In fact, the pages are so similar, and the changes are so subtle that the reader must examine the pictures carefully in order to discover the differences from page to page, tiny differences that are extremely relevant to the story. The reading of these books takes time and requires attention to detail, and sometimes it is necessary to move backwards and forwards in order to compare the images on each page and identify the minor deviations. This sort of parallel structure or architecture creates a sense of repetition where the image being viewed reveals something that contradicts and denies the previous ones, surprising the reader and forcing them to go back in order to discover if they had missed something. Thus, attention to details, such as eyebrow movement or landscape changes, is needed in order to catch the minute differences and gain a little more information.

All the books share a common central figure, a person, who in some way interacts with nature and the surrounding environment. Different types of interactions



**Fig. 5.** André Letria's accordion books  
**Sl. 5.** Leporelo-slikovnice Andréa Letrije

and relationships between man and nature (landscape, flora and fauna) illustrate the diversity of possibilities generally offered to individuals. Nature also appears in each story, challenging humans and creating obstacles or problems (*Nuisance*), but also providing an opportunity (*Departure*) or a way out through a metaphorical escape whose meaning is up to the reader to decipher (*Destiny* and *Autumn*).

Although the books are visually similar in many ways and all have unexpected endings, each one also functions on a stand-alone basis because they have different stories, settings, and characters. For instance, only *Nuisance* presents the character in

a close-up frame, depicting his face. As a result, this is the only picturebook in this series that doesn't include a nature scene. In the other three books, the action is located outside, in the open air, reinforcing the importance of a relationship with nature and the environment. In *Autumn* and *Destiny*, the protagonist is clearly an adult man dressed in formal clothes. This choice seems to be related to the central theme of the books, which tends towards adult concerns and perspectives on life. As stated earlier, both books can be read as the contemplation of life ending or even life's purpose, both posing a philosophical question. In a certain way, the adult perspective is also present in *Nuisance*, as the protagonist seems unfit to deal with the problem and, in the end, he is "eaten" (literally and symbolically) by the frog, the one willing to act. The absence of arms and hands in the illustrations of this book reinforces the passive and inactive nature of the character. This passive posture is also common in two of the other three volumes: the protagonist of *Destiny* has his hands in his pockets at all times, and when visible, the hands of the character in *Autumn* are always in the same position throughout the narrative.

Unlike the other three, the protagonist of *Departure* seems, judging by his size and posture, to be a child or perhaps an adolescent. The act of finding a solution and actually putting it into action by constructing a boat seems compatible with a more proactive and determined attitude, indicative of a character who does not accept the limits imposed by nature without a fight. The character's movements and actions are crucial to the final image where by creating a boat he frees himself from the ice-sheet.

## Final considerations

This article overviews the affordances of the accordion format in contemporary children's books by analysing a collection of short stories by André Letria. Challenging readers of all ages, these unconventional accordion picturebooks are at times similar to puzzles and other times similar to riddles. As puzzles, these books demand the reader's attention, requiring physical manipulation and interaction in order to create a clear picture. As riddles these accordion books are created using sometimes denotative (literal), and sometimes connotative (metaphorical or allegorical) meanings (in this case visual elements), which, in order to be interpreted, requires a balance between naivety on the one hand and attentive and more in-depth thinking on the other. The linguistic structure of a riddle is visible throughout Letria's collection where closely similar images repeated on a sequence of pages require close scrutiny to decipher the message. Owing to his use of repetition and the visual parallels with the other publications, the narratives presented in these accordion picturebooks create a visual anaphora. The accordion format, in this case, intensifies the meaning and also the rhythm of these picturebooks and exaggerates the repetition and movement. As these books become more popular and playful, they establish connections with high art and erudite culture, yet they are commonly available for children and families everywhere.

Clearly experimental, the books under analysis are evidently crossover (Beckett 2012) publications, calling for adult readers' participation and collaboration in the process of understanding and interpretation even though they are books published for children and target young readers. A discussion addressing the sequence of pictures, the unexpected endings and the possible meaning of each story can help the child reader to go beyond a literal interpretation. It also allows the sharing of different readings and ideas about the books themselves. This reading process is also more demanding, since the reader is a participant in the process of making sense of a message through observing, comparing, asking and moving constantly backwards and forwards, in an attempt to interpret the books.

The visual repetition and the small pages also appear similar to comics, where each page is a frame (or a box) and a tiered layout is used. The adaptation of one accordion book into an app (which also looks like a very short and interactive animation movie) displays the impact of every slight movement on each page to the fullest. The decision not to use a hard cover combined with the size of the books is reminiscent of pocketbooks, which makes Letria's books compact enough for the reader to keep them on hand. As they explore and reread the book, moving pages backwards and forwards, the reader becomes a sort of co-author (since he/she participates actively in the construction of meaning) of the message(s) the collection aims to convey as the reading process evolves and progresses.

André da Loba's accordion books also function as visual sculptures, making their similarities to artists' books quite obvious. The illustrator's background in design may help to explain the aesthetic investment made in the materiality of the book as an object that has been conceptualized as a dynamic and interactive mechanism that, once manipulated by a user/reader, can tell a wide range of stories.

Different from other publications, the books by André Letria are bolder and more challenging, at least in terms of appearance, materiality, dimension, and size, but also in terms of the complexity and length of the narratives. Letria's series stands out in the Portuguese publishing world for its apparent simplicity (small format, repetition in design, a low page count and a limited colour palette, dominated by a selection of subtle colours) and even for a certain artisanal touch, which has been compared to "fanzines".

This collection also illustrates the potentialities and the contemporary trends in the publication of accordion books, presenting them as a growing format that promotes interactivity in the reading process. By challenging readers in terms of physical interaction with the materiality of the object as well as in the interpretation process, accordion books also promote the development of reading skills in terms of visual, narrative, symbolic, and sensory literacy (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2011; Kümmerling-Meibauer et al. 2015). In addition, as artistic objects, accordion books also add more meaning to the concept of books, providing readers with new and experimental experiences by stressing the importance of materiality and promoting a dialogue between content and format.

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## Ana Margarida Ramos

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### Format leporelo i dizajn dječjih knjiga: pomno čitanje jednoga portugalskoga niza

Ovaj je rad usmjeren na analizu slikovnica oblika leporelo, osobito na nakladnički niz od četiriju takvih slikovnica dizajnera Andréa Letrije pod naslovom „Desconcertina“, objavljen u Portugalu u razdoblju od 2011. do 2015. godine. Članak je podijeljen na pet dijelova.

Počínje načelnim objašnjenjem formata leporelo te potom razmatra izabrane primjere suvremenih leporelo-slikovnica objavljenih u Europi i širom svijeta od 2009. do 2016. godine. Konačno donosi detaljnu analizu portugalske zbirke leporelo-slikovnica Andréa Letrije te razmatra važnost materijalnosti toga formata za poticanje interaktivnosti procesa čitanja, pri čem potiče razvoj čitateljskih kompetencija.

**Ključne riječi:** leporelo, dizajniranje knjiga, format, interaktivno čitanje, materijalnost, Portugal