

A CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF THE ART STYLES USED BY SELECTED ILLUSTRATORS OF SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS SINCE THE 1950s

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ABSTRACT

In this article, an attempt is made to present a critical overview of the creative work of selected illustrators of South African children's books that have been published locally since 1950. The essence of the article lies in the critical discussion of the artistic styles and techniques, as well as mediums, used by illustrators to execute the art works. The analysis of the illustrations has been undertaken according to generally recognised art styles and conventions: realism (including romantic realism and super-realism), naiveté, caricaturisation, as well as stylising with expressive elements and decorative African elements.

Although any critique of an artist's work remains a subjective issue, care has been taken to interview selected artists where there was doubt concerning the style intended. In all instances, a selection of publications illustrated by the mentioned illustrators is presented, with titles in English or Afrikaans, depending on the language of the original publication, although, in some cases, only one of the two was available.

The article concludes with some comments on general and specific themes found in South African children's books as genre, such as multiculturalism and related social issues, Africa's wildlife, unique geographical spaces and indigenous folk tales.

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This article discusses children's books illustrated by artists and illustrators permanently resident in South Africa and published by predominantly local publishers since 1950. In most instances, the book titles are either in English or Afrikaans, depending on the original publication. The article does not provide an in-depth, historical overview of illustrations in South African children's books since their inception, but, for contextual reasons, merely briefly outlines the most noteworthy illustrated children's book publications, such as the first illustrated children's book in Afrikaans published in 1879, that is, the *Eerste Afrikaanse printjies boeki ver soet kinders*, written by CP Hoogenhout under the non de plume, Jan wat versies maak, that included more than 100 images – engravings and woodcuts of a largely educational nature (Venter 1975:14); also the observation that, between 1900 and 1950, local children's books initially portrayed simple pen sketches and lino-prints in black and white, with colour illustrations only appearing in 1922 in translated books for children, as in Marie W Rothman's well-known *Hansie en die Bessiekinders*, with illustrations by Elsa Beskow. During this period, many translations of the classics and of Grimm and Anderson's fairytales were published, as well as *Aesop's fables*. CJ Langenhoven wrote and illustrated *Brolloks en Bittergal* (1925), and Eugene Marais's children's poem, *Klaas Vakie* (1925), was illustrated by fine artist, Erich Mayer (Iskemus 1987:16–17). During the 1930s and 1940s, many Afrikaans educational series were published and the well-known comic illustrator, TO Honiball, illustrated *Jakkals en Wolf* (1944). Few illustrated children's books were published during World War II, which brings us to the post-1950s – the period this article focuses on and the era when the illustrated South African children's book entered its period of bloom. This correlates with Saxby's (1997:184-204) reference to a “20th century phenomenon”, that is, the explosion of large numbers of picture books in the marketplace during this postwar period.

The illustrated children's book can be categorised in various ways, as discussed in *How picturebooks work* by Nikolajeva and Scott (2001:6-26). Some researchers regard them as books in which the text and picture are equally important, with everyday situations being depicted that children can easily recognise: therefore, picture books that relate to the very young child with a limited field of experience and whose universe includes material objects that the child understands and can relate to (Nikolajeva & Scott 2001:6,13). The pictures in picture books are not just a prop to language, they are part of it – they create something more than simply the sum of the words and pictures. The pictures in picture books do not simply illustrate the language; they inflate it and they add something different, stimulating an inner imaginative process that is in itself another type of “language-ing” (Winch et al 2001:289). Pictures are considered as giving children clues and

cues about the story and characters, as well as helping them to make the texts more attractive and visually appealing.

This article does not discuss the literary theories that underlie the picture book, but attempts to provide a critical portrayal of the overriding art styles and techniques of some of the most important illustrators of South African children's books – arranged first chronologically by date, and then alphabetically – as well as a brief overview of the themes and trends that distinguish South African children's books in this genre.

2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Academic research in the specific field of illustrations in South African children's books is limited, with the analysis and research of Carl Lohann (1967), Emma Bedford (1986), Andrée-Jeanne Töttemeyer (1986), Elizabeth Pulles (1990), Erika Rood (1996) and Piet Grobler (2004) regarded as the most noteworthy to date. Lohann's groundbreaking research in the 1960s can be regarded as the first work done in the field in which the value of illustrations in South African children's literature was addressed. Further research in the field was only carried out two decades later by a number of academics, practitioners, publishers and an artist, which culminated in a South African National Gallery publication compiled and edited by M Hölscher in 1986. In this publication, the contributions of Bedford and Töttemeyer are worth mentioning, with Bedford writing an analytical article on illustrated books in South Africa, which was the first research focusing on the aesthetic quality of the illustration. This article examined the stylistic characteristics of book illustration for children in South Africa and is still regarded as exemplary; whereas Töttemeyer focused on the visual portrayal of the black people in South African children's and juvenile literature. In 1990, Pulles completed her postgraduate research on an investigation of the picture book as a form of communication. The study showed the picture book to be a unique art and literary form and emphasised the role of the illustrator as being instrumental in creating an effective and unique interpretation and expression in picture book form (Pulles 1990:158–159). A few years later, Erika Rood researched the artist as children's book illustrator, also giving a historical overview of the earliest illustrations in Afrikaans children's books. The latest research undertaken is that by Grobler in 2004, which focused on translation theory and the similarity between translation and illustration that both deal with the intercultural transfer of a narrative. He stressed that, in the literary environment, the didactic benefit of picture books is accentuated and takes precedence over the aesthetic qualities. As the field of children's book illustrations is a highly specialised area in South Africa, relatively little ongoing research has been forthcoming since the above-mentioned research.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The illustrated children's book published in South Africa since 1950 is the focal point of this article. This research is an attempt to categorise children's book illustrations according to generally accepted art styles and conventions, that is, realism, including romantic realism and super-realism, naiveté, caricaturisation, as well as expressive and stylised, decorative African elements. Once categorised, certain artists' illustrations have been subjectively selected and analysed by the authors, for, in her opinion, these most clearly depict the style under discussion. It must be emphasised that few artists are strictly loyal to one art style, and that one artist may migrate between various styles.

4. BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF ILLUSTRATORS SINCE 1950

The period from 1950 onwards can be regarded as the watershed for the modern South African illustrated children's book. The most noteworthy reasons ascribed to this development are: the coming to power of the National Party, which placed the publishing of especially Afrikaans children's books in a premier position; the improvement of reproduction techniques and technology; the fact that children's book illustrations are recognised as a genre within the subject, Fine Arts, being offered as a subject at various universities and technikons as part of the Graphic Arts curricula; the holding of the first exhibition of original children's book illustrations at the South African National Art Museum in 1985; the fact that well-known illustrators such as Niki Daly, Jude Daly, Piet Grobler, Alida Bothma, Joan Rankin and Marjorie van Heerden began gaining recognition abroad; the fact that a number of children's book awards have been instituted since 1950; and, probably the most noteworthy of all, the publication by Tafelberg in 1955 of Alba Bouwer's *Stories van Rivierplaas*, with illustrations by Katrine Harries (Rood & Fairer-Wessels 2003:70). This book illustrated by Harries is regarded as a milestone in the history of the illustrated Afrikaans children's book, as well as ushering in the modern period of this genre. Dorothy Hill is another well-known illustrator who made her debut in the 1950s and who worked productively until the 1990s. During this period, very few coloured illustrations were published locally, and groundbreaking South African illustrators such as Harries and Hill worked mainly in black and white. In later years, this trend changed as readers became more sophisticated and book printers employed new techniques. In the 1960s, illustrators such as Günther Komnick and Cora Coetzee, who illustrated children's books until the mid-

1990s, were exceptions, as they used a combination of pencil or pen with little colour.

A marked increase in the quantity and quality of South African children's books started taking place, with high-quality colour printing regarded as the norm. Illustrating for children's books became fashionable and established, traditional fine artists such as Marjorie Wallace and Peter Clarke started illustrating children's books with well-known authors writing the story line. Other fine artists such as Nicholaas Maritz, Hanneljie le Clerq, Zwelethu Mthethwa, Azaria Mbatha and Durand Sihlali also created illustrations for selected children's books during the 1980s and 1990s, but have since moved on to more lucrative art forms.

During the 1970s, a significant period of bloom began with regard to illustrated South African children's books, with Fred Mouton and Magda van Straaten publishing until the 1980s and Leigh Voigt until the 1990s. Alida Bothma, Niki Daly, Nikki Jones, Fiona Moodie, Catherine Stock and Ann Walton are all still publishing today.

The 1980s were characterised by illustrators such as Adriaan van Zyl, Anno Berry, Cynthia and William Birrer, Catherine Kraetschmer, Dick Latimer and Nelda Vermaak who only illustrated during this decade, while Elizabeth Andrews, Paddy Bouma, Alida Carpenter, Friedel Eloff, Samuel Fourie, Jeremy Grimsdell, Carine Marais, Terry Milne, Andrew Owen, Wilna Panagos, Kathy Pienaar, Joy Pritchard, Veronica Richardson, Durant Sihlali, Mel Tod and Izak Vollgraaff continued to publish until well into the 1990s. Illustrators such as Elizabeth Pulles, Joan Rankin and Brigitte Schröder are still productive today.

During the 1990s, illustrators such as Jo Harvey, Nicholaas Maritz, Azaria Mbatha, Zwelethu Mthethwa and Thami Mzimba made their debut, although only Jo Harvey is still working in the genre of children's book illustrations. Hamilton Budaza, Nico Meyer, Jude Daly, Piet Grobler and Vusi Malindi are all still working productively. This decade marked the rise of the educational reader series aimed especially at the school market. One of these is the *Star Stories* reader series by Juta Publishers. Some of the most established South African illustrators illustrate these books, as well as a number of newcomers such as Lyn Gilbert, Natalie and Tamsin Hinrichsen, Vian Oelofsen, Alzette Prins and Samantha van Riet.

During the first few years of the new millennium, a few new illustrators made their debut, such as, among others, Alister Ackermann, Jean Fullalove, Tamsin and Natalie Hinrichsen, Karen Lilje, Alzette Prins, Vian Oelofsen, Samantha van Riet, Annelie van der Vyver and Nico Meyer.

5. CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF ART STYLES

Children's book illustrations can be grouped in various ways. In this article, theoretical art history conventions are followed and illustrations grouped according to art styles in an attempt to place the emphasis on the creativity of the illustrators. Where an illustrator works in different styles, this will be pointed out. As it is nearly impossible to include all titles, only selected books of illustrators are included (Cianciolo 1981; Rood 1995).

Art styles commonly found in South African children's books are: Realism (in a variety of forms), Naive art and Cartoons/caricatures (comics/graphic novels), while a few illustrators integrate styles such as Impressionism and Expressionism with their original interpretation, as well as decorative African elements.

5.1 REALISM AS TRADITIONAL ART STYLE

In the 1950s in South Africa, the trend followed in art circles was Naturalism. This was largely the leading style in Western Europe and suited the conservative taste of both the South African publishers and the public. Although Bedford (1986:22) and other art experts use the term "Naturalism", the term "Realism" is preferred within this context today. Today, Naturalism is seen as comprising explicit, emotionless illustrations found in encyclopedias, while Realism addresses the emotions. Realism is a style comfortable in a variety of genres and in various expressive forms that include the Romantic, the Expressive and the Super-realistic styles. Realism is a popular style for children's book illustrations, as it is a relatively easy style to understand. Similar to Naturalism, it is loyal to the natural appearance of a subject or setting.

Selected exponents of the Realism style will be discussed below. Illustrations from selected books thought to clearly depict the style will be analysed and the individual styles and techniques of each illustrator will be given in tandem. The illustrators (who are often also the authors) will first be presented chronologically (according to date of first publication) and then alphabetically according to the illustrator's surname.

Katrine Harries (1914–1978) trained as a graphic artist in Germany and emigrated to South Africa where she illustrated more than 60 Afrikaans children's books during her life. Her work falls within the School of Realism – called Naturalism by some purists – as a result of her distinctive, simple, but emotive, style with few experimental elements. Harries had the ability to capture the humanity and emotions of ordinary people with a few selected pen lines. Her drawing talent is undisputable, with exceptional insight in especially the expression of personalities that are both intimate and humble

and inconspicuous. One of her most well-known illustrations is surely the sensitive depiction of the protagonist, Alie, leaning against a tree in a pensive mood, in *Stories van Rivierplaas* (Tafelberg 1955) and *Nuwe stories van Rivierplaas* (Tafelberg 1956, written by Alba Bouwer). These two books were awarded the Scheepers Prize for Youth Literature in 1959. *'n Hennetjie met kuikens* (Tafelberg 1971) is Harries's last illustrated children's book, also written by Alba Bouwer, and was crowned with the C P Hoogenhout Award in 1971. In this book, the lifestyle of urbanised Afrikaners is depicted in a nostalgic manner. Although the ethnic differences of the characters are there, the illustrations portray the universal nature of children's behaviour towards one another in a sensitive way. The chief protagonist, Saretjie, who lives in Johannesburg, relives her mother's rural childhood when playing with a doll, Polani, under the mulberry tree. The story has rich layers of human relationships between strong women, portrayed as white and black, master and servant, but emphasises that, on a humane level, all people need love and recognition. The illustration (below) depicts Saretjie in bed with measles and Polani, the black child, kneeling on the bed, both focussed on the clay hen and three chickens. Saretjie is sitting up in bed with her hands on both hips, clearly in active conversation about the model chickens. Polani is on the bed, kneeling forward with her back to the viewer, with hands on the bed to balance her, and also watching the models with interest. Clear mood is evident in the illustration.

'n Hennetjie met kuikens



Copyright in illustrations © 1971 by Katrine Harries

The iconography is good, with no hidden meaning in the images, as meaning can only be derived in a literal sense. Harries's simple line and form create imagery with a natural sense of realistic perspective.

Most of Harries's illustrations are rendered in white and black pen and chalk sketches, as well as etchings and lithographs. With her engravings, she succeeds in obtaining a translucent effect with delicate brush strokes. Many of her students were influenced by her. As graphic artist, she contributed greatly to the quality and development of local book design. In 1961 and 1969 her work was nominated as the best-designed South African books by the South African Publishers Association (PASA).

Niki Daly (1946-) studied Art and Design in Cape Town. Initially, he worked in advertising and thereafter spent 10 years in London where he wrote and illustrated his first children's book. After returning to Cape Town, he concentrated on writing and illustrating children's books and started publishing in the 1970s. He employs a post-modernistic style with an eclectic borrow-back of various styles dependent on the story to strengthen the story line. In *The dancer* (Human & Rousseau 1996, written by Daly and Nola Turkington), for example, the style is a combination of stylisation and San rock art to accentuate the authenticity of the story. However, in the majority of his books, his characters are human individuals and are portrayed with unique characters within a typical South African context. His illustrations as in *Not so fast Songololo!* (Human & Rousseau 1985) build bridges between cultural groups without stereotyping characters, as is evident in the illustration (below) where Daly illustrates Maluzi helping his grandmother, with her well-endowed physique and flowery dress, cross the road, while a little white boy is doing likewise for his mother in the opposite direction. This image helps to strengthen Daly's view of equality across gender and racial boundaries. The rest of the image illustrates the city centre of Johannesburg in its raw essence, with images of bustling people and the repetition of popular South African chain store brands.

The book is excellently depicted using a combination of pen lines and watercolour, giving the image an ethereal reality through the soft tonal values that can be achieved only through the use of watercolour. This leaves us with beautiful renderings of daily imagery and the emotions of everyday people. In *Not so fast, Songololo!*, for which Daly received the Katrine Harries Award for 1985/6, his exceptional observational powers regarding people and places are evident. His books often address socioeconomic issues, as in *Charlie's house* (1989), written by Reviva Schermbrucker, where the dire circumstances of urbanised blacks are clearly depicted using black pen and brown aquarelle. However, as in all his books, there is always optimism and hope. Also, in *The day of the rainbow* (1989) by Ruth Craft and in *Papa Lucky's shadow*

Not so fast Songololo!



Copyright in text and illustration © 1985 by Niki Daly

(Songololo Books 1994), multicultural characters are depicted true to life. Daly enjoys working in pencil, watercolour, colour pencil and various other media. In 1982, he illustrated the well-known Ghanaian folk tale, *Fly, eagle, fly!*, written by Christopher Gregorowski, in sombre browns. In 2000, this folk tale was republished as *Fly, eagle, fly high!*, with Daly illustrating it again. Here the development in his work is evident, with a freer, earthy realism that complements the tale admirably and for which he received the Vivian Wilkes Award in 2000. His *Jamela's dress* (Tafelberg 1999), *Yebo Jamela* (Tafelberg 2001) and *Where's Jamela?* (Tafelberg 2005) display his keen observation and talent for sensitively portraying human relationships. He also received the Vivian Wilkes Award for the first-mentioned book in 1999. Niki Daly is regarded as an author-cum-illustrator who always strives to portray an authentic South African mood and atmosphere in the themes and illustrations of his books. For this reason, he was the first South African illustrator to be nominated for the Hans Andersen Award for 2002 by the International Board for Books for Young Children (IBBY).

Marjorie van Heerden (1949-) is an illustrator of the 1980s who renders her work in the Realistic style. She studied at the Michaelis Art School in Cape Town under Harries. Her first children's book was *Katie in die Goudvallei* (1983) by Jenny Seed. She has illustrated more than 50 children's books, many of which she has written, as well as reading series such as *Die een groot*

bruin beer (1984), *Sirkus toe saam met 'n tier* (1986), *'n Monster in die tuin* (1987), *'n Maat vir Mayedwa* (1988), *Nag, Oupa* (1990) and *'n Nuwe bed vir Alexia* (1992). Her use of colour is spontaneous and her dexterous application in bright pastels portrays movement and a *joie de vivre* in her work, as can be seen in *Monde's present* (Garamond 1997). Marjorie van Heerden uses exaggerated, basic depiction of facial emotion to give her work a zeal for life that few other illustrators have achieved. She takes this one step further by depicting normal, everyday body language and movement in a dynamic and original way – for this book she received an honorary mention for the Katrine Harries Award for 1997/8.

Monde's present



Copyright in text and illustration © 1997 by Marjorie van Heerden

In 1998, she illustrated Ann Taylor's *Baby dance*, in which she captures the energy and joy of this playful text in vivid pastel. She and author W Louw received the MER Award in the children's literature category in 2004 for *Mr Humperdinck's wonderful whatsit*. In 2006, she illustrated Dianne Stewart's *Folktales from Africa*.

Annelise Voigt-Peters (date unknown) is a relative newcomer of the late 1990s who also falls within the realm of Realism. For her sensitive and extremely skilled illustrations in *The red dress* (Garamond 1997), written by Dux van der Walt, she received the Vivian Wilkes Award in 1997. These illustrations portray the chief protagonist as a child of nature who tries on her Christmas dress, goes to play outside and then attempts to wash the dirtied dress. The tale is sensitively depicted using watercolour on paper. Her sensitive use of line and colour and her excellent use of tonal highlights deliver realistic imagery that one can easily identify with. Annelise Voigt-Peters has a keen understanding of human interaction and depicts it beautifully in *The red dress*.

The red dress



Copyright in illustrations © 1997 by Annelise Voigt-Peters

She also illustrated *Why birds with coloured feathers cannot sing* (Anansi 1998), written by Kathleen Arnott. Both the magician with his elaborate outfit and the colourful birds are rendered in a near photo-quality, realistic style which is testimony to her exceptional talent and accurate observation of the detail in nature. These works are rendered in oil on hardboard.

5.2 NAIVE STYLE

This style is characterised by the portrayal of anything that the artist finds worthy: minute detail, special colours or exceptional landscapes. The artist often ignores linear perspectives, thus resulting in the composition of illustrations on unusual levels that do not comply with reality. Artists of this style portray the world as they imagine it, and not as it is perceived (Paris 1985:xiv–61).

Jude Daly (1951-) – her illustrations are rendered in the naive style with sensitivity and atmosphere in, amongst others, *The dove* (Sonogololo Books 1994), written by Dianne Stewart, and *Do the whales still sing?* (Dial Books 1995), written by Dianne Hofmeyr. In *The gift of the sun* (Tafelberg 1996), also written by Dianne Stewart, she sensitively portrays the farming activities of a black couple with her exceptional control of the light that the sun gives.

The gift of the sun

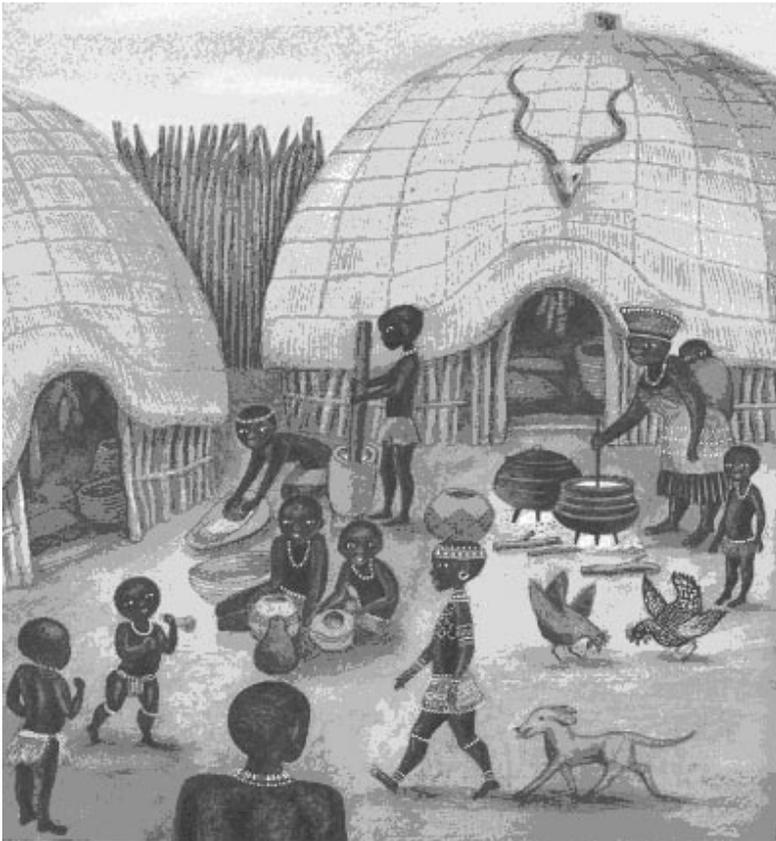


Copyright in text and illustrations © 1996 by Jude Daly

For this, she received the Katrine Harries Award in 1995/6. Her work is very detailed, as is evident in the shop scenes in both *The dove* and *The gift of the sun* – virtually every bead can be counted. Her imaging of landscapes, rooms, spaces and characters is executed very simplistically, giving it an almost naive feeling, that is, as if the artist could observe the world around her, but chose to leave out excess surface detail. Instead, Jude Daly relies on tonal value and clean lines to give her work a surrealistic quality, leaving the viewer almost entranced in her works of art. Jude Daly also received the Katrine Harries Award in 1997/8 for *The stone* (Frances Lincoln 1998), written by Dianne Stewart, for her unique portrayal of an old Egyptian tale. The book, *The star-bearer* (Frances Lincoln 2001), written by Dianne Hofmeyr, deals with a creation myth from ancient Egypt and the illustrations are delicately portrayed with a soft, dreamlike quality. In 2002, she illustrated Sheron Williams's *Imani's music* and *The elephant's pillow* (2003) by Diana R Roome.

Fiona Moodie (1952-) also works in the naive style, but her illustrations contain many decorative elements, as can be seen in the *Beauty and the beast* (1981). Her illustrations in *Nabulela* (Tafelberg 1996) are part naïve, with delicate decorative detail, as is evident in the technique used on the beadwork of the dresses in the kraal scene where the mother is cooking adjacent to typical, round Zulu huts.

Nabulela



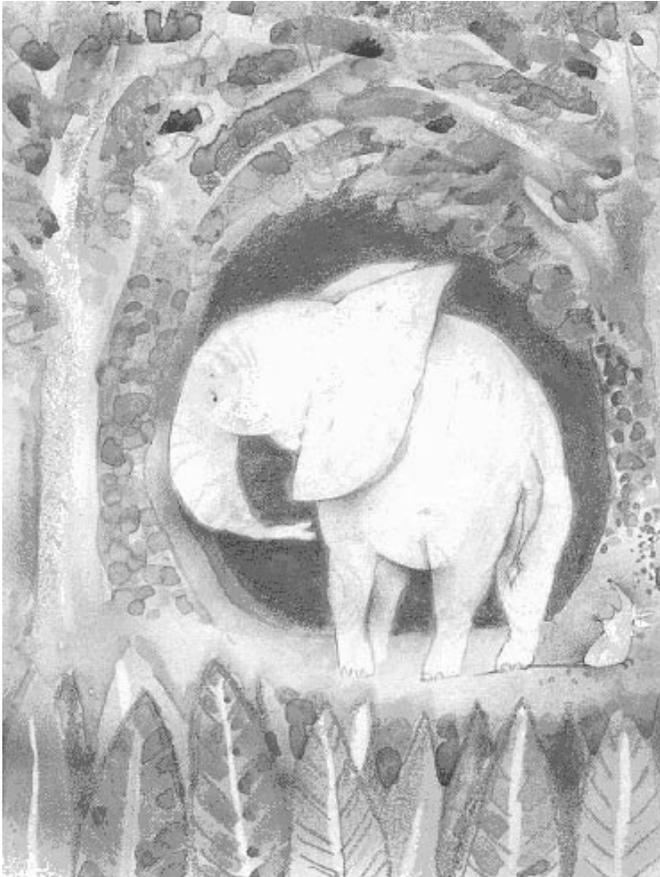
Copyright in text and illustrations © 1996 by Fiona Moodie

In her book, *Noko and the night monster* (Frances Lincoln 2001), her style is much more simplistic and playfully cartoon-like than naive, and she portrays the characters of the animals in a humorous way.

Joan Rankin (née Trehair) (date unknown) is difficult to categorise. She personally describes her characteristic style as organic, naive and humorous. For this reason, she has been placed under the Naive style. However, many of her illustrations are stylised cartoon characters and she admits to being

influenced by Edward Ardizzone and Ronald Searle from an early age. This influence is evident in *Ask for Patricia* (Human & Rousseau 1989) by R Deetlefs, in which the pig has human characteristics. She has also illustrated Pieter W Grobbelaar's *The house with the seven doors* (1988) and Jenny Seed's *The far-away land* (1987) and *The wind's song* (1991). In *The dancing elephant* (Human & Rousseau 1990, written by Iain Macdonald), her unique style which is evident in all her work is accentuated in the dancing elephant. Her use of organic line and soft colours covering complete tonal values gives her work a childlike quality which is friendly in all its facets. Her exceptional use of line creates humorous characters that embellish her style. They are soft and friendly and lovable.

The dancing elephant



Copyright in illustrations © 1990 by Joan Rankin

In her illustrations for *Five Zulu tales* (Anansi 1992), written by Kathleen Arnott, she works both stylistically and decoratively, as is evident in the leaf patterns and patterns on the clothes. Her illustrations for the duck stories,

Peter and Dulcie duck (1992) and *Wow! It's great to be a duck* (1997), are again cartooning with stylised elements, but with an exceptionally sensitive feel for detail, although her characters always contain a humoristic element. For the last book, she received an honourable mention during the Katrine Harries Awards for 1997/8. She works in ink, crayons, pencil crayon and with airbrush, scraperboard, collage and stamps, with watercolour as her base medium.

5.3 CARICATURES AS ART FORM

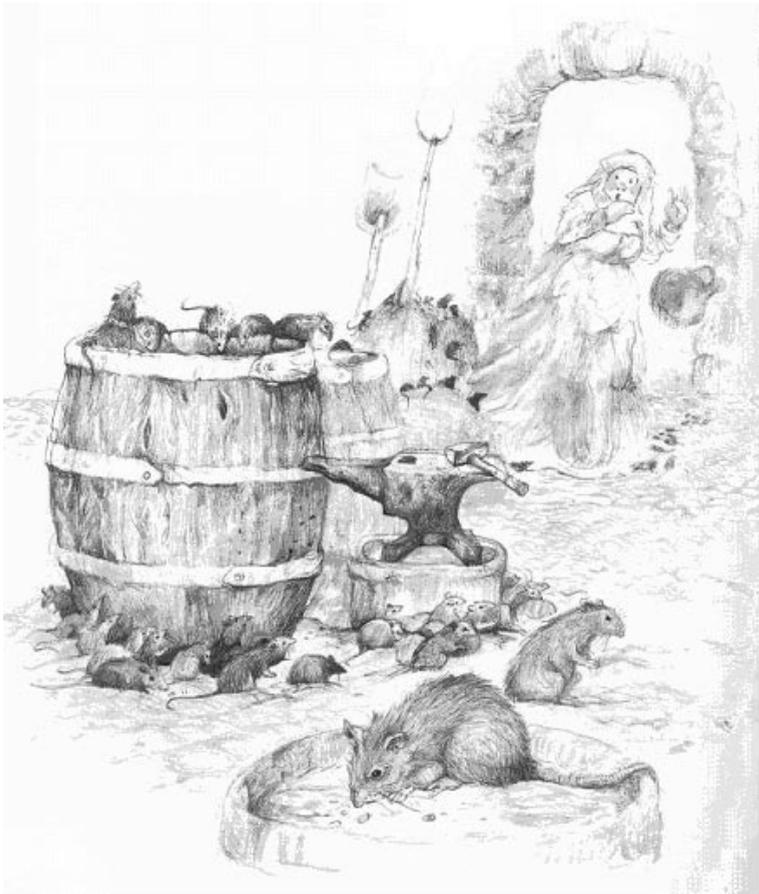
Caricaturing is a style that is often used in children's book illustrations and includes cartoons, graphic novels and comic strips. A good cartoon artist must be a skilled artisan and a good portraitist. Not only must this artist be able to draw a face with the correct proportions, but she or he must be able to amplify characteristic features without disturbing the balance of the composition (Paris 1985:XVII:28).

Humour is an essential element of caricaturing in children's books, as well as in comic books, and is regarded as an important aspect of children's literature.

Humour in comic strips is evident in the well-known Afrikaans *Jakkals en Wolf* stories of T O Honiball that were published in the mid-1990s and remained popular amongst young and old. They were originally published as comic strips in *Huisgenoot* and *Landbouweekblad/Farmers Weekly*, but were later published in book form. These cunning caricatures portrayed everyday situations in a humoristic fashion and the comic strips were very popular reading matter amongst Afrikaans children at the time.

Cora Coetzee (1940-) trained as a graphic artist. She was one of the most prolific and productive illustrators of the 1960s and used caricaturing as style together with elements of romantic Realism. Her portrayals are usually delicate line sketches in pen, pencil and chalk, with shadings in watercolour. She realistically renders her characters and remains true to the natural appearance of objects. Her illustrations in, amongst others, *Die muis sonder snorbaard* (1979), written by Marguerite Poland, won her the Katrine Harries Award in 1980. Cora Coetzee's exceptional artistic ability and subtle humour portray the situation in *Die rottevanger van Hameln* (Daan Retief 1989, reworked by Antjie Krog) with utmost sensitivity. Her insight and perceptual talent, together with her drawing ability, allow the characters to be portrayed both naturally and with individualism, leaning towards the esoteric fantasy-realism. The detail of each rat and pebble and the surprised expressions of the town's inhabitants are exceptional. Her selective use of spot colour to emphasise only certain characteristics or aspects is exemplary. The enthralling rat catcher and his magnetic powers are brilliantly portrayed.

Die rottevanger van Hameln



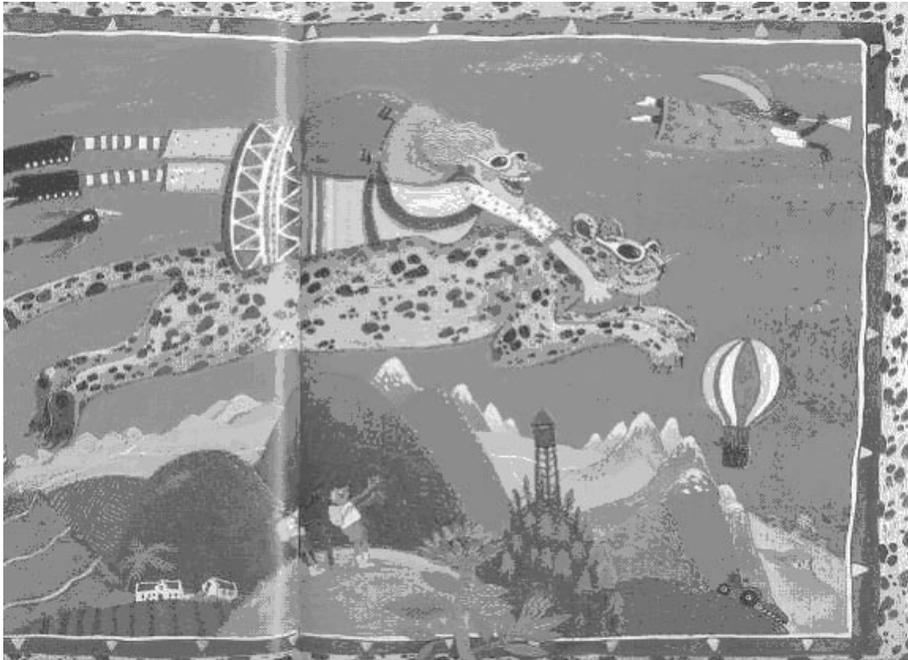
Copyright in illustrations © 1989 by Cora Coetzee

In 1996, she illustrated, in her characteristic and humoristic style, the well-known tales of Freda Linde, *Jos en die bok* (Anansi 1996) and *Jos en sog* (Anansi 1996), which were previously illustrated by Marjorie Wallace and were published by John Malherbe in 1971. Her style is characterised by her delicate lines, humour and ability to portray a typical South African atmosphere (old farm houses, troughs, etc.). She succeeds in capturing the atmosphere and her technical skills are especially evident in her ability to portray animals humorously with human characteristics, as in her portrayal of the goat and pig. She employs the same style and technique in *Vuyo's whistle* (Anansi 2002), written by Meryl Urson.

Piet Grobler (1959-) actively started illustrating in the 1990s in the cartoon style, with elements of naiveté. In *Here I am* (Juta 1996), written by Ann

Walton, the style is mainly playful and stylised, with delicate elements of humour. He successfully grounds a Western tale in Africa by framing each illustration with bright African designs. He also ties north and south together by combining their elements. The grandmother is portrayed wearing Western clothing, with African designs on her skirt, and the cheetah is wearing sunglasses. This creates a perfect unity between the two different cultures. This hybrid of countercultures, with Piet's use of bright colours and dynamic line, gives the illustrations a fast-paced feel that can be likened to the travel which the book depicts.

Here I am



Copyright in illustrations © 1996 by Piet Grobler

This mesh of culture, colour and movement rightly helped him receive the Noma Concours Silver Medal for it in 1997. For *Rhinocephants on the roof* (1997), he and Maritha van der Vyver received the Tienie Holloway Award in 1997. Piet Grobler has also illustrated the prize-winning youth books of Janie Oosthuysen, namely *Grandma Duckitt and the Getaway-car* (1996) and *Grandma Duckitt and the Intergalactic V-919 Supercomet* (1998), as well as her *Professor Experimento's frightening formulas* (1997) and *Sergeant Spoofer's incredible lie detector* (1998). With these illustrations in black pen on white, Piet Grobler succeeds in humorously portraying each character. In the *Carnival of the animals* (Human & Rousseau 1998), written by Philip

de Vos, Piet Grobler portrays the characters with his unique style, and, in *Carnival of animals*, he cuts back on his use of colour, leaving more white spaces which give his work an airy feel that makes the work less “real” and more imagined – which further creates a tie between the poems and the illustrations. This work received international recognition in France (Octogene de Chêne 1999), Iran (TIBBY 1999) and Italy (Primo Alpi Apuani Award 2000). In his book, *Please frog, just one sip!* (2002), there is a strong sense of naiveté, with the animals being depicted by way of delicate pen sketches and washed watercolour. In *Dokter MeDiSyn en die keiser se seun* (2001), a mixture of cartooning and romantic Realism is evident. Piet Grobler illustrates the new *Liewe Heksie en die rekenaar* by Verna Vels, whereas previous Heksies were illustrated by Dorothy Hill. He also illustrates Philip de Vos’s translation of a collection of Annie Schmidt’s verses in *Die spree met foete* (2002). Piet Grobler has succeeded magnificently in developing a unique and distinctive style, with 43 books to date, and he is currently working on a number of new titles.

Ian Lusted (1952-) is an exceptionally versatile illustrator and is equally comfortable using both digital and traditional media. His work comprises a wide range of styles, from detailed Realism to graphic design and cartoons. He won the Vivian Wilkes Award in 1996 for his decorative, stylised illustrations in *The king’s magic drum* (1996) by Thomas Nevin. In *Abracadabra ABC* (1993) by Wendy Hartman, his illustrations are largely stylised, with blue splashes in the background. His illustrations of *Mondi the fluteplayer* (1990) by Dianne Stewart are more expressive and naive. He uses contrasting rectangles in bright, solid colours that give depth to the story and the comic-like characters. In *Eendag was daar* (1993) by Leoni Hofmeyr, his illustrations are more cartoon-like, with a humorous undertone which, according to Heale (1994:20), shows a similarity to Cora Coetzee’s animal characters. He adjusts his style to the story and prefers to work in pen, watercolour, poster paint and acrylic.

Vian Oelofsen (1974-) obtained a BA Fine Arts degree from the University of Stellenbosch, with a Honours degree in Illustration. His work is rendered in cartoon style and in comic format. In *Net perfek* (1999) by Rachele Greeff, he succeeds in portraying the emotions of the characters with a few pen strokes. The illustrations are full of energy. Every frame offers a complete world. He and author, Sue Kramer, received the Vivian Wilkes Award in 2001 for *Ah-Bekutheni?* (2001). In *Hou vas, Seekoei* (Human & Rousseau 2005), his humorous cartoon style is again evident. Some of his work for the children’s story, *Jamie & Sebastiaan*, written by Martie Preller, can be seen in the weekly edition of *Vroue Keur* magazine. His work is reminiscent of Quentin Blake’s illustrations in most of Roald Dahl’s books, with explosive

movements in virtually every illustration. He uses mediums such as pen, ink and watercolour.

5.4 STYLISING WITH EXPRESSIVE ELEMENTS

Expressionism contorts the natural appearance of reality to transfer the mood of the artist to the subject. This style is ultimately concerned with the inner expression of the artist and is therefore a highly personalised and subjective style (Hastie & Schmidt n.d.:118; Paris 1985:XIV:53).

Alida Bothma (1953-) started illustrating in the 1970s and is difficult to categorise, as she adapts her style to each story that she illustrates. Her work varies from realistic to humoristic, to graphic, to stylised. She also works expressively by manipulating colour and planes with strong elements of figurative abstraction. Simplified romantic Realism also plays a role in capturing the essence of her portrayals magnificently. After illustrating Rona Rupert's *Wat maak jy Hektor?* (Human & Rousseau 1976), they completed another 12 books together. With her individualistic, expressive use of mixed-media techniques with newspaper as collage element and pastel and conté pencil, she for example uniquely creates the visually challenged boy (see image below), Everest, in *All Everest's birds* (Human & Rousseau 1984) by Rona Rupert. With her feeling for the experimental and her dexterous drawing ability, she creates rich textures with strokes of watercolour that lift out otherwise vague, visual images. The expressive characteristics of the illustrations are also evident in her handling of form, colour and dimensions.

All Everest's birds



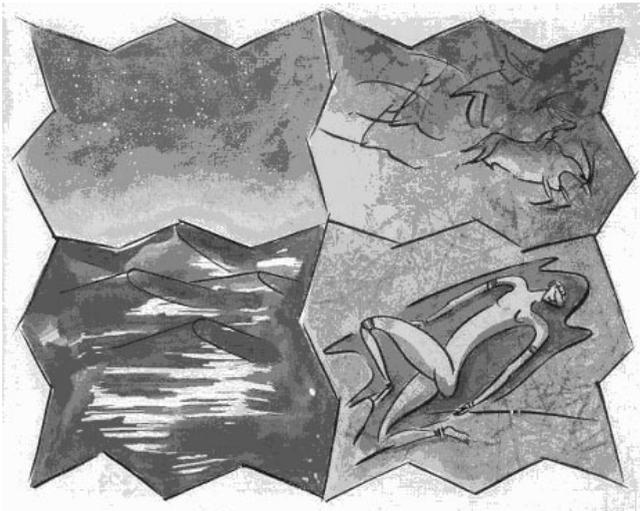
Copyright in illustrations © 1984 by Alida Bothma

In 1983/4, she was awarded the Katrine Harries Award for *All Everest's birds* and *Die aarde moet vry wees* (1984) by Pieter W Grobbelaar. In *Eendag die blou voël* (1985) by Elsabé Steenberg, she uses watercolour in muted colours to effectively portray the soft sky, with fine line drawings of the swarming birds. In "Blouvalk kry sy jokkie" in *Goue fluit, my storie is uit* (1988), she utilises various graphic possibilities to develop her technical skills. Alida Bothma's style varies from stylised and simple, to sophisticated "children's art" drawings with shadows and scribbles, to illustrations where she exhibits an individualistic and unique form of freedom in line and texture. Her illustrations in *Katie Colly Wobbles* (JL van Schaik 1992) by Elsabé Steenberg, and her illustrations in the new *Bible for children* (2002), written by Louise Smit, are both in a more realistic style, although created a decade apart. She has illustrated more than 60 children's books and prefers to work in a combination of pencil, charcoal, watercolour, coloured ink, acrylic, oil, collage and pastel and freely experiments with various techniques to obtain the necessary texture, mood and atmosphere.

5.5 DECORATIVE AFRICAN FOLK ART

Various local illustrators have been influenced by traditional African art and design, such as Joan Rankin in *Five Zulu tales* (Anansi 1992) and Fiona Moodie in *Nabulela* (Tafelberg 1996). Niki Daly gives his personal interpretation of San rock art in *The Dancer* (1996), and, in *Here I am* (1996), Piet Grobler brightly decorates the border of each illustration with African elements, such as leopard skin, Ndebele designs and more.

The dancer



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6. SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE

Art techniques in South African children's books have similarities to the techniques employed by illustrators worldwide, as, for example, the use of mixed media, collage, gouache, dry brush and quilting. Mediums such as watercolour, oil, pen, pencil crayon, lead and conté pencil, pastel and oil pastel are used.

Styles most commonly found in South African children's books are Realism, which is a portrayal of reality; Cartooning, which depicts characters in a humorous manner; and, to a lesser degree, the Naïve style, which portrays reality in a primitive fashion without perspective. Other styles used are those of folk art, which portrays typical traditions, symbols and cultural forms using line and colour, such as the San rock art, as portrayed in Nikki Daly's *The dancer*.

7. THEMES

South African children's books address universal themes such as love and fear in family relationships; grandmothers and grandfathers and their grandchildren; the search for love and acceptance; the discovery of an own identity; the realisation of place – including the contrast between rural and urban life; social issues such as the less privileged; and war and peace. These are all themes that are addressed in the illustrated South African children's book. Other themes that make them uniquely South African are themes such as

- South Africa's unique multicultural population and the depiction of the different cultural groups in relation to the historical development of South Africa;
- South Africa's unique social problems that relate to multiculturalism;
- Africa's wild animals;
- South Africa's diversity of geographic areas, such as the Kalahari, the bushveld, the coastline, and more;
- indigenous folk tales that often form the basis of unique South African tales and visual material, as is evident in the *New African Stories*, a new and developing series for readers up to 16 years of age. (This reading series consists of stories collected throughout Africa and provides the opportunity for children to learn more about Africa from Africa. The stories range from myth to legend, to stories about current events and daily life. All the titles are simultaneously available in English, Afrikaans, Sesotho, Xhosa and Zulu. The illustrations are simplistically realistic, requiring a basic level of visual literacy.)

8. CONCLUSION

Illustrations in children's books are often the first introduction children have to art. It is therefore important that children are exposed to quality illustrations from an early age. Children and parents must be made visually literate in order to appreciate not only the simple, one-dimensional, mass-produced Disney art, but also the art created within the South African context and the application of various art styles. The only guarantee that the illustrated South African children's book will survive is sustained demand therefor. It is therefore imperative that every South African reader, parent and educator promote the continued reading and purchasing of illustrated South African children's books.

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