

literature with conventional methods.

Most children's books are told in chronological order, but it has also become common (not so say banal) to make use of flashbacks, interplay of different temporal levels and other complex temporal patterns. Finally, concerning frequency, we can observe that the iterative frequency, telling once about events that take place regularly, which narratologists present as unique for Proust, is one of the most common devices in children's literature. Thus, by studying temporality, we can once again demonstrate in what ways children's literature is different from general literature.

Every new theoretical direction is only legitimate if it allows us to disclose such dimensions in literary texts that we would not be able to discover with other methods. We have recently seen how children's literature research has reached new depth as it has borrowed analytical tools from two separate, but in some respects resembling areas: the feminist and the postcolonial criticism. Both directions have taught us to read literary texts from the point of view of a marginalized social group. Children in our society are also marginalized and oppressed. With tools from feminist and postcolonial theories, we have learned to discern between conservative and subversive elements in children's books, classic as well as modern.

In its turn, narrative theory has given us tools to analyze in detail how texts are constructed and to understand why certain devices work well in children's books while other do not. It has also facilitated a historical comparison, which not only pinpoints changes in themes and values, but the profound changes in the aesthetic form of children's literature. Perhaps eventually we will be able to answer the tantalizing question of exactly what makes *Alice in Wonderland* a great children's book.

The weight of a Butterfly's Wing

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Let us begin by taking up the attitude of the 'Philosopher watching two butterflies', a painting by Hokusai from 1814 or 1819¹. What is of interest to us here in the image of this man's contemplating the mating dance of insects, is the scene of meditation on the mystery of life: the mystery of delicate life exalted as two white forms meet each other. The butterflies' wings evoke motion in the air, but they hover above the figure's head more like two enigmatic ideograms than two living forms. The silence of their fluttering allows, above all else, for the very essence of representation, for a depiction that is free of any artifice, which the portrayal of squawking birds would require.

And it is the meaning of these visual messages addressed to the children in the world, and to readers in general, that I wish to consider in this celebration. The union of word and image has made reading a complex process; the contemporary book, the conveyor of writing and the "product of screen thought", as described by Anne-Marie Christin², is full of surprises, and is aimed at those who, in my book *Jeux et enjeux du livre d'enfance et de jeunesse*, I term "children of the videosphere", e.g. our children that use the world network of digitalised images and read these in picture-books, comics or films, but also in computers and video-games.

These can go to museums, and then witness on their "game boys" the fight between Starmie, the Pokémon, "that has a jewel at its center glowing like the seven colours of the rainbow", against Butterfree, the Pokémon-Butterfly, that

¹ See Matthi Forrer, *Hokusai*, translation by Catherine Bednaereck, Bibliothèque de l'image, Paris: 1996, p. 32.

² Anne-Marie Christin, *L'image écrite*, Paris: Flammarion, coll. Idées et Recherche, 1995, p.6.

"makes most of its ability to fly and fills the air with toxic dust", if one stands by the Nintendo 2000 Pokémon Official Annual "Gotta catch 'em all!"...³

In this analysis, the butterfly will appear as a very revealing object, shedding light on various systems of thought, in the same way as the cloud in Eastern and Western painting, if we follow the investigations of the critic Hubert Damisch in his "Theory of the cloud"⁴. This piece of work has already helped me to compose a "short treatise on the rainbow" in a past investigation on baroque trends in children's literature⁵. As is the case for the cloud or for the rainbow, the pursuit for the butterfly's presence is not an impressionist search for themes, but rather a pointer (an "index") allowing the investigation of a culture in its entirety. Returning to the print "Peony and butterfly in the breeze" from the series "Great Flowers" of 1831-1832, by the same painter Hokusai⁶, is the butterfly in the breeze the symbol of the fragility or the strength of life? Does its form suggest a relationship with the plant that is bent in the force of the blowing wind? Or, did the painter simply want to record a "being in the world"? As far as existence is concerned, the butterfly is a sign of nuance and of immeasurably small distinction. The contemporary Italian novelist Roberto Puimini would agree, as in his book *Lo Stralisco*, recently translated into French as *La verluisette*, he asks: "And do you think the butterfly knows he exists as he rests on the moss, light green like him?"⁷.

In children's books, as we will realize, this insect brings two perspectives together: the first relates to its symbolic meaning and which often identifies it with the young reader. Again, agreement here comes from the German poet and pedagogue Jean Paul writing in 1807 in his treatise on education *Levana* : "What are children then? Our daily habits and preoccupations alone conceal the charm of these angelic figures for whom we can not think of more beautiful names; flowers,

³ Jean Perrot, *Jeux et enjeux du livre d'enfance et de jeunesse*, Paris: Edition du Cercle de la Librairie, 1999. The Pokémon Official Annual is published by Pedigree, Pedigree Books limited, The Old Rectory, Matford lane, Exeter, Devon EX2 4PS, England, 2000.

⁴ Hubert Damisch, *Théorie du nuage*, Paris: Seuil, 1972.

⁵ Jean Perrot, "Petit traité de l'arc-en-ciel" in *Art d'enfance art baroque*, Presses Universitaires, Nancy, 1991.

⁶ Matthi Forrer, Edmond de Goncourt, *Hokusai*, Paris: Flammarion, 1988, p. 279.

⁷ From 1807 quoted by Gilles Brougère in *Jeu et éducation*, Paris: L'Harmattan, Série Références, 1995, p. 83.

dew drops, small star, butterfly"⁸. Is this a romantic perspective or an archetypal attitude founding the reality of childhood in a perception transformed by myth? We are dealing here with the hidden power of the image that knows no confines. In this way a child presented in the form of a butterfly's chrysalis ready to hatch can be found in the frontispiece of the work of another poet, painter and engraver, the English romantic William Blake, in his poem *The Gates of Paradise* (1793). We can see the child beneath a leaf, which is itself carrying a caterpillar, with the caption: "What is Man?" The text emphasizes the vigour of the artist who produced it: "The Sun's Light, when he unfolds it, depends on the Organ that beholds it."⁹.

The second perspective concerns the scientific knowledge of the object in question: what do we really know about the nature of butterflies? The mystery surrounding their metamorphoses and their life cycle has always avoided scientists' eyes, as shown in the documentary *From caterpillar to butterfly* (Gallimard Jeunesse, 1988), and in which we also learn that the national butterfly of Japan is the *Sasakia charonda*. In the domain of children's culture, the problem in transmitting knowledge is this: what is concealed behind the beauty of things that we want to pass on to children? And how? Will butterflies not just remain magnificent devices to be used in the science of learning numbers, and in providing a final bedazzlement of colour, as is the case in the Australian book *1,2,3 of Australian Wildlife*¹⁰? In this picture-book, the child-reader first meets "One dolphin dashing across the water", then "2 echidnas...". Further on, he beholds "Three mice munching in the moonlight", and so, up to "Nineteen fish fluttering their fins" and to the last "Twenty brilliant butterflies bringing beauty to the bush." These insects then shine as the ultimate glory of collected learning, hinting at the sensuous elevation that fosters and screens belief at the same time in a baroque apprehension of the world. Yet science nowadays means other requirements.

And so we shall tackle such matters from a historical point of view by bringing together the conception of the child from a specific period and the

⁸ Roberto Puimini, *Lo Stralisco*, French translation, *La verluisette*, Paris : Hachette Jeunesse 1992, p. 59.

⁹ For more on this subject, refer to the book *William Blake* by the English poet Kathleen Raine, London: Thames and Hudson, 1970, Reprint, 1999, pp.36-37.

¹⁰ Steve Parish, *123 of Australian Wildlife*, Nature Kids Australian Learning Collection, Steve Parish Publishing : Acherfield BC, Queensland, Australia, 1998.

teaching of the sciences that correspond to it, thereby adding a modest complement to research undertaken, after Philippe Aries, by the team of Egle Becchi and Dominique Julia in *History of Western Childhood*¹¹. In doing so we shall see how the silkworm acted as a catalyst for exchanges between France and Japan.

In this recalling of the past, we will also take into account the aesthetic creations of several contemporary artists and the positive features of our "museographic society", described by Catherine Millet in the context of the globalisation of culture affecting the children of industrialised countries¹². Never have these children had such easy access to a museum. Never has popular culture been so influenced by art, as the Japanese film *Pokemon 2* testifies, where the image of a baroque dome taken from Italian architecture makes an appearance! Would the butterfly's wing taking flight towards the light, whether in splendour or in simplicity, represent the taking flight of the spirit? Permanency or transformation, could butterflies' life-cycles suggest a model analogous to the hatching of future "citizens of the world"?

The trivial and the useful: from story to fable

There is one point on which Charles Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood* differs from the version that the Brothers Grimm used in their *Märchen*, which were well documented by Jack Zipes, the last recipient of the Brother Grimm's Prize awarded by the Osaka International Institute and to whom I pay homage. The detail can be found in the episode in the woods that shows how the young wandering child is tricked by the wolf, who arrives before her at her grandmother's home in order to eat her. The reasons behind this flightiness are presented using distinct images. In Charles Perrault's *Stories or Tales from Bygone Times*, the founding text for young people's literature from 1697, the story recounts: "And the little girl took the longest route, enjoying herself as she gathered nuts, chased butterflies and made bunches of flowers"¹³. The sophisticated storyteller went

¹¹ Egle Becchi, Dominique Julia *Histoire de l'enfance en Occident, De l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Paris: Seuil, 2 volumes, 1998.

¹² Catherine Millet, *L'art contemporain en France*, Flammarion, 1995.

¹³ Charles Perrault, *Contes*, edition G. Rougier, Paris: Garnier Frères, 1967, p. 114.

beyond the popular French version, which made do with the bland contrast of "the way with the needles" that the little girl took, and the "way with the pins" that the wolf took"¹⁴. If gathering nuts is part of the foundation of social realism, which dominates one aspect of Perrault's tales, the butterfly would appear, at first sight, to be a redundant feature in comparison to the collecting of flowers which was the only aspect to be retained in the German version where it reads: "She wandered off the path and into the woods to gather flowers: plucking them every here and there, but the prettiest ones were always that little bit further and further away in the forest"¹⁵.

The coupling of the flower and the butterfly confirms the distinct touch of baroque aesthetics, the aesthetics of decorative excess, which is linked to the idea of childhood unruliness that must be pacified. Michel Fauron's exuberant illustrations that were tended in 1982 for the adaptation of *Little Red Riding Hood*¹⁶, show the split in the point of view that has existed since 1697. According to 17th century motifs, childhood is associated with frivolity and with the absence of the reason that would become the principle of classic vision: a fable by Edme Boursault called *The Lark and the Butterfly*, that had much success in the same year as Charles Perrault's small volume, reminds us, if at all we needed reminding, that this symbolic system was very much ingrained in the consciousness of contemporary high society, as can be seen in numerous pictures¹⁷.

Similar to the cicada in Jean de la Fontaine's fable, the butterfly represents a graceful form, devoid of social purpose. Bishop Fénelon was strongly opposed to this parasitic function. Fénelon was the private tutor to the Duke of Burgundy, Louis XIV's grandson, whom he looked after from 1689 to 1695. This great teacher is renowned for his work, *The Education of Girls* from 1687, and above all for *The Adventures of Telemachus* written from 1694-1695 to educate the future

¹⁴ Claude de la Genardière, *Encore un conte? Le Petit Chaperon rouge à l'usage des adultes*, Nancy: Presses Universitaires, 1993, p. 16.

¹⁵ Refer to my conclusion "Contes et chocolat; Plaisirs de Versailles/Plaisirs d'Eaubonne", in *Tricentenaire Charles Perrault: Les grands contes du XIIème siècle et leur fortune littéraire*, Paris: In Press, 1998, pp. 377-387. See *La Guirlande de Julie* by Charles de Montausier(1641), presented by Irène Frain, Paris: Robert Lafont, 1991.

¹⁶ M. Fauron, ill., *Le Petit Chaperon rouge*, Paris: Ruyant publications, 1982.

¹⁷ See the fable of Boursault in Norman R. Shapiro, *The Fabulists French, Verse Fables of Nine Centuries*, Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992, p. 51.

king. It was an educational fictitious account based on the adventures of Ulysses. It was published in 1699, but underwent over a hundred reprints in the 18th century. Fénelon's thought was defined by the utilitarian tradition of John Locke and by the economic pragmatism of Colbert, Louis XIV's minister, some time a patron for Charles Perrault: the moralist would present the educative fables to his pupil, fables that retain each one of their functions, even today. Their purpose, of course, involved cultivating a catholic king's personality in view of the Counter-Reform that was inextricably linked to the baroque aesthetics that reigned in the court of Versailles, as was emphasized at the three-hundredth anniversary of the publishing of Perrault's *Contes* in 1997¹⁸.

One of these fables entitled "The bees and the silkworms" is very instructive. It describes the debates of the bees and the silkworms, both of whom claim to have the favour of the Gods. Whereas the bees are defended by Jupiter, the silkworms are protected by the Goddess Minerva, who "presides over the arts" (16). Defending his arguments against those of the aggressive insects, in spite of their civilized society and the sweetness of their nectar, the "haranguer from the silkworms" states, "...each one of us displays the wonders of nature and uses himself in a useful way. We have the virtue of changing form..." (Ibid.).

And of describing the many states of the animal, initially visible in the form of "small worms composed of eleven intertwining little rings with the most dashing display of colours that people admire in a flower bed..." These creatures have the privilege and sense of being distinct: "We can spin material to dress the best men, even kings" Again, the one with the liveliest sympathies says: "Finally, we turn ourselves into beans, but into beans that can feel, that can shed their skin and that show they are alive" The final argument claiming to clinch the advantage is that of their apotheosis: "And following these wonders, we suddenly turn into butterflies, glowing with the brightest of colours. This is why we will no longer give in to the bees and will daringly fly up to Olympus." (Ibid.)

Linked to the image of the flower and to the adoration of gardens, as in the precious poetry of the time, and a veneration in religious iconography from the

¹⁸ Fénelon, "Les abeilles et les vers à soie", in *Oeuvres 1*, Published by Jacques Le Brun, Paris : Gallimard, La Pléiade, NRF, 1983, p. 225.

beginning of the 16th century, as in *Les Grandes Heures d'Anne de Bretagne*¹⁹, the butterfly is the state that concludes an epic vision of life by an elevation towards the realm of the Gods. A baroque dynamic, if that is what it was, and the fable turns into a moral lesson. Fénelon, who assiduously attended the salons of Colbert's three daughters in the 1680s²⁰, was in full knowledge of the man whose intentions were to re-launch the culture of silk and the silk butterfly in France, as shown in a documentary in 1993, *The Silk Worm*, broadcast as part of the 'BT Nature' series (Bibliothèques du Travail) from the Publications of the Modern French School founded by the famous teacher Célestin Freinet²¹. This documentary allowed anyone to access the elements of knowledge that Fénelon, in his time, intended only for the Prince. It presented images taken from the 1602 edition called *A brief discourse on the raising of the silkworm* and mentions all the most whimsical of superstitions which related to the subject: in fact, the female workers had to literally hatch the eggs, which they would put next to their skin or keep warm with hot water bottles. A very strong maternal relation connected insect to human, nourishing the worm and instituting an exemplary reciprocity to that which bonded the pupil to his teacher in Fénelon's system. On an international scale, the volume still refers to all the types of silk that wonderful Asian butterflies can produce today.

The Butterfly ball: Awakening the Subject and the scientific point of view

When Hokusai was meditating on "the peony and the butterfly" bending in the wind, an exceptional female writer, George Sand, whose love affair with Musset had been widely talked about, was putting together her novel *Le secrétaire intime* (1834). She presented the symbolically named scholarly entomologist Cantharide, describing a sophisticated game inspired by "the strangest and wildest of Princess Cavalcanti's creations: the insect ball". The guests had to dress themselves to form "a huge gathering of butterflies and insects". Having "consulted twenty scholars and read many pieces of work", George Sand could pride herself

¹⁹ *Les Grandes Heures d'Anne de Bretagne* illustrated by Jean Bourdichon (1500-1508).

²⁰ See the introduction by Jeanne-Lydie Goré, for *Les aventures de Télémaque*, Paris : Classiques Garnier, 1987, p.18.

²¹ BT Nature, no author's name, *Le ver à soie*, PEMF, Mouans-Sartoux, 06 France, 1993.

on the precise nature of her description. Concerning a young lady with a "long black velvet body" sporting "large black and yellow striped taffeta wings", she wrote: "With her long pale face, the slits in her wings and her slightly lively gait, she could have been mistaken for Podalyre, the big butterfly that is so embarrassed about its long stature that swallows deign not to follow him, leaving him to struggle against the wind any old how with the perforated yellow leaves of the sycamore"²².

This is romantic flight towards Hokusai's vision and burlesque mockery! The same process involving carnival-like dressing-up and science, the physiognomy forging human personality and animal appearance, directs the narrative view in *Contes d'une Grand-mère* written thirty years later for the novelist's grandchildren between 1872 and 1876. At the time, George Sand was very interested in education and had just published *Les idées d'un maître d'école*²³, and she was a follower of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. She read his *Botaniste sans maître* (1773) and wrote the preface to Jules Neyraud's *La botanique de l'enfance* (1847) that Jules Hetzel the editor of *Magasin d'Education et de Récréation* had republished in 1866. One of her tales "The big-eyed fairy" illustrates a wonderful character whose eyes were "two microscope lenses that were forever revealing wonders to her, wonders that others could not see"²⁴. As Max Milner showed in *La fantasmagorie*²⁵, literary make-believe became more refined as scientific discoveries were made. In this uncanny Hoffmannesque story, "the big-eyed fairy" organizes an "insect ball" with real moths. Each moth is introduced by its Latin name, its physical features and the plants it eats. The story ends with the storyteller being lit up by "the fantastic dance about my flowers by the little fairies of the night".

In this way, Jean-Jacque Rousseau's pupil manages to go beyond her 'teacher', as he remained studying plants, but Sand took the veneration of life a

step further, rising up a notch into the dimension of living beings. The theories of evolutionism in J. B. Lamarck's *Zoological Philosophy* (1809) and of transformism in *The Origin of Species* (1859) by Charles Darwin have quite a pronounced effect on her writing. In one of her stories, "The Dog and the Sacred Flower" the main character Mr. Dog claims to have been a dog in a former life, and when he is asked, "Were you a frog, lizard or butterfly too?", he replies of having been first of all "a pretty white flower". He adds:

"One morning I detached myself from the stem, I floated as the breeze carried me. I had wings, I was free and I was alive. Butterflies are but flowers that took flight one special day when nature was inspired with creation and fruitfulness"²⁶.

"The power of desire"? The metaphor of such a coming into being, which we find in another of grandmother's stories, "What Roses Say" that is wonderfully illustrated by Nicole Claveloux under the title *Rose Breeze* and published by 'Editions des Femmes' in 1977, is the poetic illustration of the history of science as it existed in the mind of feminist George Sand. This writer's itinerary was typical of the changes in educational ideas that took place in the 19th century. In the first half of this century, the discoveries that one book, an authentic "documentary" of the late 1830s that was illustrated with beautiful colours and called *Butterflies*, terms "natural history", led educationalists towards lepidopterous insects to "provide entertainment" for young readers. In fact, these insects that were classed as moths and butterflies were also exceptional teaching material. "The beauty of their colours and the rich and varied aspect they provide for collections explain the predilection of which they are the object"²⁷. At the end of the century, this reasoning became part of utopian views.

Influenced by Orientalism and a Zen-like philosophy, *A grandmother's stories* is based on a conception of childhood that leads, with "ecological" inspiration (even before the term had been coined!), to the defence of nature and

²² See extract from Philippe Berthier in George Sand, *Contes d'une grand-mère*, 2ème série, Meylan, Les éditions de l'Aurore, 1983, p. 30.

²³ See our study on "George Sand et la propagation des Lumières sous le signe de la lumière" in *Le livre d'enfance et de jeunesse en France*, Bordeaux: Société des Bibliophiles de Guyenne, 1994, pp. 177-211.

²⁴ George Sand, *Contes d'une grand-mère*, op. cit., note 21, p. 180.

²⁵ Max Milner, *La fantasmagorie*, Paris : PUF, écriture, 1982.

²⁶ George Sand, op. cit., p. 125.

²⁷ Anonymous, *Les papillons*, Description of their nature, their customs and their habits. Dedicated to young people, decorated with various images of nature painted, and engraved in steel. Paris: Amédée Bedelet, libraire, éditeur de livres à gravures destinés aux enfants 20 rue des Grands Augustins, vers 1840.

butterflies. As a writer and a teacher, George Sand devoted herself to the education of her granddaughters, as the "little girl" belonging to "the lady of Akashi" is educated in *Le dit de Genji* by Murasaki-shikibu, of which an illustration has recently appeared in France²⁸, but the socialist-idealist wished to address all the children in the world.

Scopic impulse: impulse for life, impulse for death

The butterfly appears naturally in the first of Father Castor's Atelier books. He revolutionized children's illustration from the early 1930s onwards and transcribed into practice the educational ideas from Bakulé and from the 'Education Nouvelle'. The small book from 1932 *Magic Album*²⁹ makes use of a playful piece of material: "a sort of magic telescope" made out of a red square of plastic and a blue square of plastic, and through which the reader can successively make out two different aspects of the same image. "Baroque machinery" made possible by plastic, that summons up themes and animals, also baroque, like Circe's emblematic animal the peacock, according to Jean Rousset³⁰, or the opposition of night and day. The plate featuring the butterfly, close by that of the peacock in this book, plays on the "secret" of metamorphosis: the blue square reveals the caterpillar, "not a very pretty animal", and the red square allows the reader to see a "big colourful butterfly that looks just like a flying flower". As the eyes switch from one image of the metamorphosis to the other, it is the butterfly's job to reveal the forces of life that bring along beauty and illumination. The preamble that Father Castor gives his work emphasizes that it originates from the "magic wand" and the "flying carpet", wonderful supports that belong to the "King of Time", and whose use by the young reader puts him in charge of all development. The same incitements can be found in *The Butterfly* (1995) from the

²⁸ Extract translated by René Sieffert in Murasaki-shikibu, *La branche du prunier*, illustr. Soryu Uésugi, Paris : Editions Alternatives, Coll. Grand Pollen, 1998.

²⁹ Rose Celli, images from Nathalie Parrain and Hélène Guertik, *Album magique*, Paris : Flammarion, Le Père Castor, 1932.

³⁰ Jean Rousset, *La littérature de l'âge baroque en France, Circé et le paon*, Paris : Librairie José Corti, 1985.

collection "Mes Premières Découvertes" by Gallimard editions, where the illusion is produced by moving a clear screen of plastic.

A perfect symbol of harmonious private life, the metamorphosis of the child returns with force in the poetry of the politically involved poet Paul Eluard, when in 1951 he asks the illustrator Jacqueline Duhème to illustrate *Grain d'Aile*, a story showing the changes that take place with a little girl whose name is the transposition of the real name belonging to Paul Grindel. Light and pretty, 'Grain d'aile' grows like a plant and wants to have wings so that she can fly. "But what she liked the most were butterflies. She was jealous of them when she saw them zigzagging around as happy as fish in water"³¹. Her wish comes true, like the zephyr in George Sand's story, but without any arms, the girl wishes to find land and her friend Pierre with whom she can play! The principle of reality is reached only once the principle of pleasure, which corresponds to the fantastic, has been worn out. As she goes beyond this stage of infantile narcissism 'Grain d'aile' will find herself "with the others, all the others, those who are light, and those who are less light, those who walk looking down at the pebbles and those who look up at the sky" Jacqueline Duhème illustrated this story three times (again in 1977 and 1988), and it is interesting to look at how she scattered images of butterflies among her illustrations, according to her mood at the time. An obvious artistic effort that also lies in the two versions she presented for Maurice Druon's *Tistou Green-thumbs*, an ecological tale whose illustration she handled in 1957 following the success of the first book, and also Jacques Prévert's *L'opéra de la lune* that she illustrated in 1953, all of which have been translated into Japanese.

That the butterfly is associated with the instant testifies to its privileged inscription in Impressionist aestheticism, in particular Japanese-inspired Impressionism in France, where Monet's house at Giverny, decorated with pictures by Hiroshige and others has encouraged the practice of this style, especially for children, with the gap that characterizes children's culture. A collection of prints in New York's Metropolitan Museum shows that this feature is shared by Englishman Richard Doyle's illustrations for the Fairy Queen in the 19th century, like the pieces of lacquerware from the Japanese Shibbata Zeshin (1807-1891). One of our finest female illustrators, Michelle Daufresne, let her fantasy and spirit roam freely when

³¹ Paul Eluard, *Grain d'aile*, Paris: Raisons d'être, Raisins d'enfance, 1951.

she published *Blue butterfly* at the Ecole de Loisirs in 1984. To the music of a children's song that praises the beauty of a red flower, the poppy, she added a little dramatic piece with a distich rhythm: "Nice dream butterfly, nice blue butterfly" The small child who is sleeping in the grass is awoken by an insect inviting him to come "play, dance and fly" The myth of the child that is "having fun" is presented in such a way, bringing with it the regret of a moment that does not last long enough, as the butterfly flies away. The motif of a dangerous chase is depicted with the appearance of a blackbird, but finishes with a turnaround: "On my hand it came to rest, gave me a gentle kiss" And the book ends with the butterfly flying off into the freedom of the flowers, floating on the breeze. The delicate touch of pastel colours and the gentleness of watercolours create a wonderful moment of happiness in, as Baudelaire stated, the "green paradise of childlike loves": the colours reinforce the area of contrasts between the pink of a face and fluttering traces of blue.

Impulses of life and love, impulses of death; the latter is rarely brought up directly in children's books. However, it is worth noting the publication of Kafka's *The Bridge* by *Enfantimages de Gallimard* in 1981, with illustrations by Henri Galeron. In this fearsome text, the feeling of horror belonging to the character of the bridge who is afraid of collapsing into the abyss of the raging water beneath him is represented graphically by the depiction of a trout jumping up to devour a very pretty butterfly. The latter is bright red and black, whose union presides over sado-masochistic rituals...

However, it is in the work of Frédéric Clément that we find the greatest exploitation of the forms and colours, and of the metamorphoses of butterflies, from which he draws the most surprising aesthetic effects. The artist's fascination had already burst out in *Soleil O*, a graphic rhapsody published by Magnard in 1986, in a collection created by Frédéric Clément himself for the occasion and called *Atelier Nuaginaire*, no doubt to register the mannered antithesis contrasting it to Father Castor's *Atelier*. This wordless picture book begins by showing the sun springing up out of the cone of an erupting volcano, which vaguely recalls Mount Fuji, but seems to be adorned with a pearl on top of it. Next, the mountain splits open and releases a twisted form that turns into a magnificent butterfly. Successive changes transform the butterfly into the figure of a woman entirely veiled, then into

a flower, which on folding up becomes a chrysalis, which in turn becomes a butterfly. Finally, the latter transforms into the image of the volcano cone once again. This is the cycle uniting earthly fire and heavenly fire, the butterfly, the woman and the flower, in a refinement of colours and of material effects taken to the extreme. This book was republished in 2000 by Albin Michel Jeunesse beginning the collection of "Instant Cléments" (Sweet spells) in a new version called *Minium, rêve rare de 1 minute*, and the accompanying text informs us that this reverie took place by the Louvre on Saturday April 26 1986. Images of small pebbles, twigs and feathers were added to the original illustrations, which accentuated the solid properties of materials. As we shall see, these effects will bring us back to Japan in an instant...

These unpublished investigations were transposed and transformed into two major pieces of work. First of all, in *Dreams of Sleeping Beauty* (Casterman, 1997), Frédéric Clément thought of portraying the dreams of Charles Perrault's heroine who sleeps for a hundred years. Her dreams are invaded by an extraordinary creature: an ephemeral, nocturnal and predatory moth, which relates its impressions and revels in her beauty. In a magnificent dreamlike landscape, which is that of Venice revisited through the technique of a sombre post-impressionism, Clément plays on indistinct aspects and on the infatuation of a voyeur calling to mind the hero of Kawabata's *Sleeping Beauties*: drinking the "dew" from the corner of the eyes of beautiful women, the night-time visitor confuses oral drunkenness with the intoxication of sight. The illustrations highlight the root of pleasure in the quality of materials, the fabric of décor, and the moiré of waters. The scopic impulse culminates on the Klimt-like portrayal of a double image of a sleeping woman surrounding Saint Marc square, on which the dusky figures of fantastic beings sport coats that are the wings of giant moths. Their ocelli are inordinately large like the eyes in the following plate, whereas the Beauty appears naked, floating on a flooded Saint Marc square. A dream of death or of pleasure, the book is the layman's unexpected version of a sensual Visitation.

An even more ambitious piece of work by Frédéric Clément called *Museum* (Ipomée Albin Michel Jeunesse 1999), is the fictitious notebook of an entomologist who left for Brazil to study butterflies. He also receives specimens from many different countries. Each of the twelve chapters is devoted to one

particular species associated to a story and to illustrations. The book claims to pay homage to Vladimir Nabokov, the entomologist who discovered and gave his name to a butterfly and whose passion as a collector is shared by Clément: it concludes with extracts from the writer's real notebooks presenting the gradual invasion of the literary imagination by this phantasmagoria. A card from Saint Petersburg even suggests that the ornamental ponds in the Winter Garden where Nabokov first fell in love take the shape of butterfly wings (p. 156).

Having opened up his own artist notebooks to the public, and published extracts from them in the study I recently published³², and having resorted to several young Japanese girls as models in his many books, Frédéric Clément is a fine connoisseur of painting and calligraphy. The Japanese butterfly he chose to study is rather interesting because its name is "Actias selene (the Attacidae family), the moon-butterfly" (p. 64).

It is no surprise that the chapter dedicated to this butterfly stresses moonlight effects and describes a "procession, following the cherry trees: twelve delightfully pale young ladies walking with short calculated steps" Not an "insect ball" as George Sand would have it, but a majestic "procession", a baroque parade giving rhythm to the "litany of a Utamaro's whites" There is the extraordinary vision of the fifth girl with the "silver white of the wing of a firefly clung to the bark of a birch tree behind Ishimuka theatre at Edo, in the age of the Dragon, overcast sky" (p.70). Or the eighth girl with the pinkish white ochre of the silk butterfly, the powdered Kaiko, resting on the neckline of Morokoshi's kimono as she sleeps, a summer evening in the faint light of a red lantern" (Ibid.).

And with this sensual evocation the silk butterfly completes the journey we began with Fénelon. Here however, description turns to poetry. It is not the value of market use that is claimed here, but the value of prestige: the whole of Japan has its prestige increased and is taken into the ranks of the artistic model. These are truly inspired "sweet moments" shared with us by the artist Frédéric Clément who has moved away from pure impressionism, and who still scatters twigs, shells, bird feathers and coded ideograms on the pages of his books. And the central plate of *Muséum* (p. 72) is a formation of collage, a palimpsest of what the artist terms

³² Jean Perrot, *Carnets d'illustrateurs*, Paris: Les éditions du Cercle de la Librairie, 2000.

"traces and remains": butterfly wings, dried leaves and flowers that half conceal a face. The blank in the middle of the picture signifies the exhaustion of human landscape as it brings to mind the atmosphere in the *Exhausted Book* by the same author. Life thus triumphs through the shadows of eclipse and the pure nature of visions.

Apotheosis: the butterfly's happy medium

Frédéric Clément achieved integrating entomological science into his fiction; his montages of pieces of wings or his depiction of ocelli recall the scientific documentaries on butterflies that today use the scanner to illustrate a butterfly's scale cover, as is the case for the surprising venomous Monarch butterfly in an animated book on our subject³³. The difficulty with this genre of work is to find the balance between information and alluring illustration, so that the role of image and anecdote do not take precedence over science. The classification and the description of cycles and surroundings are complex, so it is worth highlighting the beautiful documentary made by Una Jacobs, *The Year of the Butterflies*³⁴. It unites wonderful plates and proven didactics: the important side of the image is shown, for example, on a double page displaying the metamorphosis, like an enormous cornucopia freeing the energy of these superb creatures – the swallowtail butterflies (p. 8). Further on, the plate "the butterfly in its natural habitat" presents the animal in its baroque glory (p.11). Finally the plate that links the insect to the image of the plant on which it feeds looks like a radiant wheel (p. 16-17). The alternation between the explosions of energy and phases of contemplation is concentrated around a vision, which, especially in the plate summing up the cycles of the year, expresses the contour of life as both a descent and as a rising up, and as the emblem of directed totality. And this is where we find the aestheticism dear to Fénelon once again.

³³ Maria M. Mudd et Wendy Smith-Griswold, French translation, *Les papillons*, Paris: Albin Michel Jeunesse, 1991.

³⁴ Jules Renard, *Le sourire de Jules*, Paris: Editions Alternatives, 1999. p.23.

The butterfly also spreads into the pages of “natural history” books, like those by Jules Renard written “to make people smile”, and illustrated by Michelle Daufresne from these lines:

“The butterfly

This billet doux folded into two looks for an address with the flowers”.

This is the aesthetic of haiku, and in opposition to the frivolity of *Blue Butterfly*, is attributed dark, dusky hues by Michelle Daufresne’s representation. The butterfly is the light antithesis to the cow in *Mona the Cow*, the story of the big animal that is “in love” but she does not know with whom, and she finds happiness and love in the butterfly’s colours, “for Mona the cow loves colours”, “Mona the cow is an artist” And in a paradoxical self portrait she gives her the features of Mona Lisa!³⁵

Here we find ourselves in the tradition of the humour that is a reflection on growth in *Alice in Wonderland*, a central piece of work in children’s literature. The blue caterpillar who smokes his hookah and rejects Alice’s arguments that turning from a caterpillar into a butterfly is indeed an odd thing. But the child, following the consumption of the mushroom, sees her neck grow and is mistaken by the pigeon for a snake. The indecision over identity that preys on young minds has been brilliantly expressed by Alain Gauthier in the image that illustrates this fanciful metamorphosis. Alice rolls herself up around the pigeon like a snake, but is displaying the magnificent wings of a butterfly³⁶.

Alain Gauthier is an artist who was at the centre of the aesthetic revolution accomplished in France in the 1970s by François Ruy-Vidal and Harlin Quist. *Pimpernickel’s Butterflies*, a collection of nursery rhymes and little expressions gathered and prefaced by François Ruy-Vidal³⁷ is the first piece of work that allowed him to pass from painting to children’s illustration. This collection is

³⁵ Claude Bonnin, *Mona la vache*, Paris: Thierry Magnier, 2000.

³⁶ Lewis Carroll, Alain Gauthier, *Alice aux pays des merveilles*, Paris: Rageot éditeur, 1991. p. 35.

³⁷ François Ruy-Vidal, *Les papillons de Pimpanicaille, Comptines et formulettes d’ici, de là-bas et d’ailleurs*, illustrated by Alain Gauthier, Paris : Editions de l’Amitié/G.T. Rageot, 1980.

typical of the publishing that rejects the difference between “art for children” and “art for adults”, and it is based on all-round good humour (“Pimpernickel, king of the butterflies, whilst shaving, cut his chin...”), and on an imagination that unites jokes, sensuality and naïve romantic rhetoric (“The rose is so beautiful that we shall pluck it”). There is no surprise that the corresponding plate groups the rose, the image of the woman and the butterfly together (p.11).

The result is that the alternative in the artistic handling of the butterfly can be defined between these discerning investigations and a guided decorative naivety, approaching a “childlike spirit”, which is often identified with popular imagery. Jacqueline Duhème embodies this trend, and with this in mind, an interesting comparison can be found in the different versions tended by the illustratress for three editions of *Grain d’aile* at the various stages of its progress. The 1951 version³⁸ from the beginnings of a self-taught person looking for identity (Jacqueline Duhème was 24 years old), but who enjoyed the security of renowned authors, the stroke is gentle and the colours, constrained by the means of printing at the time, are limited to a range of greens, pinks and faint ochre. The images show just a few dragonflies and mayflies with clear slender wings, like the contemporary childlike heroes, such as the child in *L’opéra de la lune* by Jacques Prevert, Tistou, etc. By the 1977 version the tone had changed; it was now the time of fieriness and maturity (the artist had just reached fifty, like the wise Hokusai at the beginning of the presentation). Having illustrated various works by Miguel Angel Asturias, such as *The Talking Machine, The Man who had Everything*³⁹, Jacqueline Duhème gives in to the charm held by the flaming colours of the South American jungle: her images burn with reds and yellows in a violent contrast with greens. There are many butterflies, they have glowing red wings dotted or outlined in black, and powerful solid appearances. They are enlivened by blood and unrest in life, and they flutter around exceptional bunches of flowers. In a symbolic way, the period comes to an end with Paul Eluard’s *The Child who did not want to grow up* from 1980 published by G.P., a text bringing together war, the destitution of the poor

³⁸ Paul Eluard, illustrated by Jacqueline Duhème, *Grain d’aile*, Paris: Raisons d’être, coll. Raisins d’enfance, 1951.

³⁹ Miguel Angel Asturias, *The Talking Machine*, Double day & Company, New York, 1971; *Souvenir d’enfance*, Paris: Harlin Quist-Ruy-Vidal, 1972; *L’homme qui savait tout, tout*, Paris: G.P., 1973.

and the saving beauty of idealised childhood, its position close to nature. The illustration leads Caroline “the child who did not want to grow up” from the yellow butterfly of a first bouquet bathing in the blue vase beneath which she was sitting, to a rainbow dominated by yellow, red and orange, supporting “the disorder of insects in the stars of the dew” We see the child prevailing as she waves to us to point out his victory and a butterfly, in the top right hand side of the page, shows by its heavy shape, the diagonal rise towards hope... Here we have the first sketch of the rainbow that will crown the hero of Prévert’s *Dunce* (Folio Benjamin Gallimard) in 1989.

Jacqueline Duhème’s third period was marked by her passing over to Gallimard publications. A subtlety worth mentioning: *Grain d’aile* in Folio Junior in 1988 is surrounded by a ring of three butterflies on the book’s cover. They are the result of a change: they are more slender and puffy like children’s clothes, they replaced the hawkmoth’s skull from the first two pages and once again found the transparency of blues and the delicate touches of grey. This development is all the more palpable if we compare the two versions of *Tistou Green Thumbs*, the one from G.P. in 1977 and the other from Gallimard in 1993. In the first we find stunning flowers, beautiful bouquets with high decorative value, and bronze butterflies as if to counter the horrors of war. And in the second, the contrast between the reds and the greens was replaced by the bringing together of oranges, blues, greys and purples. The butterflies’ wings become lighter and are torn to pieces, combining delicacy and a new serenity. As a liberated woman, Jacqueline Duhème flies the flag of controlled sobriety. She is not far from the age when Hokusai obtained wisdom and she has reached the happy medium of the butterfly.

Epilogue: Vision of the white fox and the fireflies

We can only finish this presentation by recalling the work presented to us by Professor Keiichi Hatanaka who came to France and presented the techniques of some of the great contemporary masters, Akaba, etc. The story he chose to bring to us, *A Fox transformed into a bonze* by Miyoko Matsutani and illustrated by Tadao

Miyamoto⁴⁰, seemed destined to provide food for our thought concerning powers of representation. Perhaps we can remember that in this story the Prince has a white fox with which he plays as a child. The animal turns into Zeian, a handsome boy, after the king is massacred and his castle burned. In search of his young master, Zeian turns into a fox again when he learns that his master has become a bonze and is in the Kozenji temple. To enter the holy place, he resumes his previous appearance. The master nonetheless recognizes his old playmate, but the latter gets killed by a hunter whose house he stays out one night, even if he was carrying a letter concerning his employer’s mother confirming his origins. All that remains for the grieving prince to do is mourn the death of his loyal animal.

The striking point here is the importance of the repeated metamorphosis which makes the fox, the messenger of the gods in Japanese tradition, the double expiatory of his master. Zeian dies allowing the original legitimacy of his master to be recognized. The first illustration that seals this recognition is also that of remembering games from the past: the child, wearing flower coloured clothes, would play ball (Froebel would be delighted!) with his fox. It is a surprise to see that in this illustration, and for the only time in the book, a pair of white butterflies preside over the childhood games. Jules Renard (baroque coincidence!) wrote that, “the butterfly is a billet doux, folded in two” who “looks for an address with flowers” But further on in the book, flowers, butterflies, snowflakes, fox and ideograms seem confused in the same indistinct shapes on the very plate where we see the master mourning the animal that died in the night. The snowflakes are like the fireflies, like the ones that shine in the tragic children’s film *The Fireflies’ tomb* by Isao Takahata (1988) depicting the drama of Japanese children threatened by death. This is a little like the hero of *La verluisette* by Roberto Puimini, whose title indicates a “plant-firefly” that lights up the night sky. Isn’t the children’s picture book a billet doux that the artist, following the bloody loss of initial happiness, addresses to the legitimacy of his own past? As Frédéric Clément writes in his notebooks for *Museum*, butterflies are “souls” And with this idea often comes a glimmer of hope. As Professor Hatanaka, citing the works of the “Doyos” poets from the 1920s, concluded his presentation in February 2000 at the Charles

⁴⁰ Miyoko Matsutani, Tadao Miyamoto, *Kitsune no Bousama*, Tokyô, Popura-sha, October 1999.

Perrault International Institute he referred to this haiku by a twelve year old Japanese child, Noboru Tooyama:

“In the blazing sky

A butterfly

Turned red and flew on...”

If, according to the principles of “chaos theory” the fluttering of a butterfly’s wing off the coast of Brazil is capable of triggering off an earthquake in Texas, then we must assume that the brightness of the Japanese butterfly wing will have effects on our conception of children’s illustration, as a whole.

Children’s Literature and the Crisis of Childhood

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*Childhood, placed at a tangent to adulthood, perceived as special and magical, precious and dangerous at once, has turned into some volatile stuff – hydrogen, or mercury, which has to be contained. The separate condition of the child has never been so bounded by thinking, so established in law as it is today. This mythology is not fallacious, or merely repressive – myths are not only delusions – chimeras – but also tell stories which can give shape and substance to practical, social measures. How we treat children really tests who we are, fundamentally conveys who we hope to be. (Marina Warner, *Managing Monsters*, 1994, 35-36)*

*There is a growing consciousness of children at risk. But...there is also a growing sense of children themselves as the risk – and thus of some children as people out of place and excess populations to be eliminated, while others must be controlled, reshaped, and harnessed to changing social ends. Hence, the centrality of children, both as symbolic figures and objects of contested forms of socialization, in the contemporary politics of culture. (Sharon Stephens in H.A. Giroux, *Stealing Innocence*, 2000, 9)*

Scholars of children’s literature have long understood that the images of children and childhood contained in the texts we study are constructs which both reflect the observed real lives of children and seek to mould those same children – the implied readers of the books, magazines and other reading matter created with a juvenile audience in mind. Since its beginnings, children’s literature studies has also identified a tendency for writing for children to vacillate between dichotomous images of childhood – the demonised and the idealised – and equally divided theories about how to deal with children in society. The images and attitudes to children in children’s literature have, of course, been closely linked to those