Laura Little

Nonfiction Picturebook Design in the UK in the 1940s

1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the context of children's publishing in the late 1930s and 1940s in the UK, leading to the publication of Marie Neurath's early Isotype books. This is a period of special interest in children's publishing, in which advances in print, production and design combined to create an environment in which high-quality, innovative children's books thrived. It is not the intention here to provide a comprehensive study of children's publishers of that period, but to explore how a few different publishers and illustrators responded to British and European modern aesthetics and modern ideology and how they influenced one another, a cross fertilization that led to the publication of pioneering illustrated nonfiction books for children. The examples provided here will also include unpublished work as these very early examples offer insights into the thought processes, considerations, and explorations that publishers, illustrators, and printers adopted in a new and fast-changing environment. John B. Thompson suggests that "the publishing field is an intensely competitive domain characterized by a high degree of inter-organisational rivalry. [. . .] The staff of every publishing house are constantly looking over their shoulders to see what their competitors are doing" (2012, 10), a sentiment valid for twentieth and twenty-first century alike. Considering publishers alongside one another helps to provide a context for the work they produced. Marie Neurath's Isotype approach of using bold flat colors and repeated pictograms, for example, diverges markedly from the nonfiction titles of her contemporaries in the UK but her work nevertheless has aspects in common with them. While numerous children's publishers were in the market during this period (see Joe Pearson (2010) for further details), the focus of this chapter will be the influence of Noel Carrington's publishing strategy at Country Life and Puffin Picture Books, and Marie Neurath's early work published by Max Parrish and packaged by Adprint.

Penguin Random House is one of the "Big Five" publishers in the UK today, and the founding of one of their imprints, Puffin Picture Books, is a seminal moment in children's nonfiction publishing. While early Ladybird Books, published

Acknowledgements: With thanks to the team in the Department of Typography and Graphic Communications at the University of Reading for access to The Otto and Marie Neurath Isotype Collection.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111354651-004

by Wills & Hepworth, can be challenging to date accurately (as can books from other publishers, e.g. some Puffin editions), the 1940s saw the publication of titles on fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and adventure stories, while nonfiction titles on nature, history, and mechanical topics formed their list in the 1950s (Zeegen 2015; Day 2023). In recognition that "tools, typologies and theoretical frameworks that exist for fiction and narrative picturebooks cannot necessarily be directly applied to nonfiction picturebooks" (Goga, Iversen and Teigland 2021, 3), Ladybird Books will not be considered here, rather Joe Sutliff Sanders' characterization of nonfiction as "[inviting] critical engagement" will be followed (2018, 224). Sutliff Sanders focuses primarily on books published during a later time period, but his definition can also be applied to earlier titles; when discussing early Puffin Picture Books, for example, Kimberley Reynolds describes them as having a "view of instilling the habit of independent thought" (2016, 103).

2 Children's publishing in the 1940s: Design, illustration, printing, and publishing

Significant changes came to the UK in the fields of illustration, printing, and publishing during the interwar years. The 1930s and 1940s saw the introduction of new courses at the Royal College of Art (RCA) with an emphasis on professional instruction. These courses included fashion, product design, and graphic design. Under the umbrella of graphic design came an emphasis on illustration and commercial art, and an ethos for supporting practitioner-lecturers lent an industry focus to these courses. Sir William Rothenstein, Principal of the RCA, hoped to inspire the next generation of artists and designers to create "a new Modernism rooted in traditional practices" (Hawkins 2017). Alan Powers commented on work created by design students at the RCA in which they could be seen to be "combining progressive and conservative qualities in their work" (2018, 8). Rothenstein's approach was described by Robert Hawkins as "conservative radicalism", as it was conservative in taste, yet radical in methods. Similar principles can be seen in children's publishing of this period, in which "past and future were powerfully connected in the sphere of radical publishing" (Reynolds 2016, 201).

While influences from the European avant-garde are apparent during this period, British modernist art has distinctive characteristics of its own, reflected, for example, in Paul Nash's essay "Going Modern and Being British" (1932). In 1924, Nash described the "outbreak of talent" he witnessed while teaching at the School of Design at the Royal College of Art, where he advocated that his students should have "a new freedom to practice a form of Modernism through commercial art",

while maintaining artistic freedom and integrity (Powers 2018, 10). Of this group of students, Edward Bawden, Enid Marx, Helen Binyon, and Eric Ravilious went on to illustrate children's books. Of these, Marx was perhaps the most overt in embracing in her children's book illustrations bold, geometric patterns, that were derived from textile designs, such as her stylized images of the sea in *The Pigeon Ace* (1943), which are made up of a geometric v-shaped pattern in blues and greens. Kimberley Reynolds discusses how visual experimentation across typography and design that results in striking, graphic images is perhaps more easily recognized as avant-garde; for example, the illustrations in Lewitt-Him's *The Football's Revolt* (1939) are influenced by avant-garde movements such as Cubism. In contrast, early Picture Puffin books, aimed at children aged 7–14, have been described by Paul Stiff (2007, 23, 34) as experiments in "gentle modernity", where modernity is viewed as a social project, as distinct from the striking graphic, visual experimentation that Reynolds outlines as more recognizably avant-garde. This view is echoed by Harriet Cory-Wright, who suggests that, "The Puffin Picture Books offer an alternative instance in which modernity can exist more as a social construct than something that can be distinguished from the look and feel of modernism" (2014, 262). According to Reynolds, "one of their recurring themes, benefits of progress, was very much in keeping with the message of radical children's literature" (2016, 98), which "urged young readers to be excited by the prospect of social change and to engage with rather than retreat from modernity" (9).

The changing role of the commercial artist was further facilitated by developments in printing and publishing. In 1935, Allen Lane founded Penguin Books with the aim of producing high-quality, affordable paperbacks that could be "bought as easily and casually as a packet of cigarettes" (Our Story, no date; Stevenson 2010). Influenced by Soviet picturebooks and Père Castor books (Baines 2010; Pearson 2010), Puffin Picture Books were carefully designed to combine high-quality illustrated content with affordable production. World War II brought paper rations and ink shortages; here, Penguin's business model was advantageous as their high print runs meant that they were allocated a proportionate amount of paper for their 1940 print run, based on their previous year's paper use.[1] This gave them sufficient paper stock to create their new Puffin imprint (Stiff 2007; Baines 2010; Stevenson 2010). The principle of affordability remained strong (Stiff 2007). Each Picture Puffin was carefully designed to keep costs down, both as titles in their own right, but also as part of the wider Penguin business. For example, each Puffin Picture Book was exactly twice the size of a Penguin paperback to allow for efficient warehouse storage. The publisher worked closely

1 See Iain Stevenson (2010) for more detail on book publishing in World War II.

and collaboratively with their authors, illustrators, and printers across the different aspects of the publishing process.

When Noel Carrington, the editor of Puffin Picture Books (Baines 2010), approached Lane about launching a nonfiction list, he advocated for an illustrated children's list, comprising "books on 'nature, mechanics and farming'" (Jackson 1993, 37). As a publisher, Noel Carrington (1895–1989) was an advocate for high quality design. He worked for Country Life from 1923 to 1928 and again from 1935 to 1940. In the 1930s, he joined the Design and Industries Association (DIA), which was instrumental in shaping his understanding of design and printing processes. In the late 1930s, despite Country Life's reputation for celebrating predominantly English gardens, architecture, furniture, and country houses, Carrington drew on his interests in both design and print and began to expand their children's list, incorporating highly illustrated content. The authors and illustrators he collaborated with included the young talent identified by Nash: Carrington commissioned work by Bawden and Ravilious, among others. Titles included Kathleen Hale's *Orlando the Marmalade Cat* (1938) and Eric Ravilious' *High Street* (1938), with a text by J. M. Richards, which it could be argued were precursors of the Puffin Picture Books,[2] as they offered Carrington an opportunity to explore lithography as a means of producing colorful illustrations in high print runs (Pearson 2010, 34–40). In this aim, Carrington was facilitated by the new generation of commercial artists, whose experimentation across multiple artistic mediums gave rise to high quality craftsmanship and an understanding of production techniques in areas such as printing. For example, Eric Ravilious (1903–1942) worked across numerous formats as an artist and designer. His paintings are held in private and public collections. He produced wood engravings and lithographs for book illustration and created designs for Wedgwood ceramics. His book *High Street,* first published in 1938 by Country Life Ltd., was published as a facsimile edition by Thames and Hudson and the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2012 and 2022, demonstrating a continued interest in this work. Originally proposed as a children's book comprising an ABC of shops on the high street, the final version contains 24 color lithographs of shops, including the butcher, knife sharpener, and submarine equipment shop (Figure 1). The content focuses on an explanation of what the different shops offer, and implies a delight in the less usual, such as a submarine shop, a taxidermist and a sign and letter works. Originally published in an edition of 2,000, the book largely met with positive reviews and was praised for its "wit and elegance" (Powers 2013, 58). There was some discussion regarding the audience of this book; however, Carrington, who was building a new children's list,

2 Hale and Ravilious were both later commissioned to create titles for the Puffin Picture Books.

steered the project in this direction and considered it a book for children (Powers 2013, 56). A mild nostalgia can be seen in content such as the style of the diving suit, and the architecture of the shop fronts. The contrast between the repeated, graphic pattern in the submarine shop's display and the Victorian style of the ironwork above the shop sign highlights Ravilious' gentle exploration of tradition and modernity. Ravilious uses a muted color palette gently offset by highlights in yellow and crisp linework that lends a characterful impression to the diver's suit. From a technical perspective, this book was Ravilious' first attempt at working with lithography, a printing technique based on the principle that water and oil repel one another. Artwork made by means of a copper or wood engraving would typically be transferred to the printing plate by the printer, but in lithography, the artwork is drawn directly onto the printing plate (usually a lithography stone) by the illustrator with an oil-based, black, greasy crayon.[3] This allowed for an immediacy in the printing process, as it was the illustrator's unprocessed image that was printed. Creating prints in color using lithography is complex: the illustrator needs to understand the printing process to separate and draw their image onto several printing plates which are inked using different colors. A CMYK four-color print for example, requires separate plates for cyan, magenta, yellow, and black ink, which are printed on top of one another to create a colored print. So, if the image contains green, a plate for both cyan and yellow needs to be made and the images on the two plates lined up correctly so that the printed image appears green to the viewer's eye. To prepare a lithography plate, the surface of the stone is regrained using carborundum grit of different weights, leaving a smooth surface. However, the texture of the stone's surface is unlike paper, creating a different amount of resistance and drag when the artist moves a crayon across it, so that drawing on it feels quite dissimilar. During the war, a shortage of lithography stones resulted in zinc composite plates being substituted, and Ravilious used these for the *High Street*. These plates were typically dark grey, which made it harder to see the black marks of the greasy crayon. However, although it involves a high level of skill from both the illustrator and the printer, lithography as a process provides scope for the reproduction of a rich illustrated image, and this offered Carrington the confidence to print a new, highly illustrated children's series in the form of Puffin Picture Books. It demonstrates Carrington's early explorations of combining high quality content with developments in print technology to produce affordable books with color illustrations in high print runs. The *High Street* also marked the start of Ravilious' professional relationship with Carring-

3 The crayons can be diluted with ionized water to create an 'ink', which can be used with a dip pen or a paintbrush on the lithography stone, offering versatility of mark-making.

ton, who went on to become a champion for his career, for example by highlighting Ravilious' work in his essay on the "The Modern British Artist in British Industry" (1945), and Ravilious was one of the first illustrators Carrington commissioned to create a Puffin Picture Book.

Figure 1: *High Street* (1938) by J.M. Richards, ill. Eric Ravilious. A window display of a submarine shop which shows a diver's suit. Photo credit: The Stapleton Collection / Bridgeman Images.

With the outbreak of war, Carrington and Lane were keen to publish books on nature and the English countryside for children evacuated from cities, including titles such as *On the Farm* (1940) (Wright 2009). In late 1939, Ravilious produced a series of pencil and watercolor images of chalk figures in the English landscape, including the "The Westbury Horse" and "The Wilmington Giant" (Friend 2018,

266). These images were intended to provide some of the illustrations for a Puffin Picture Book on "White Horses".[4] Powers (2013) comments on the combination in these images of aspects of the countryside and contemporary visual representations, for example, the goods train in the background of "The Westbury Horse", or the barbed wire fence cutting through the forefront of the image of the "Wilmington Giant" (Figure 2). Ravilious' contemporary at the RCA, Helen Binyon, describes how the angle from which he painted the chalk figures, such as from train windows, or from a vantage point higher up on the hill, created an unusual focal point (Binyon 1983, 109). These images of a historic landscape connect with Paul Nash's idea of "the spirit of place", linking together nature and evidence of human intervention, such as chalk figures, hedges and field boundaries. At 68 meters high, the "Wilmington Giant" is a well-known example of one of England's chalk figures. It was later covered over to hide a distinctive landmark from planes during World War II.

In his exploration of new printing techniques and in his engagement in the 1930s and early 1940s with content matter ranging from nature to machinery,[5] Ravilious exemplifies "conservative radicalism" in both his urban and rural images.

In contrast, Marie Neurath in *If You Could See Inside* (1948) also depicts an image of natural features in a hillside (Figure 3), but as a generic landscape, with insufficient details to connect it to a particular geographic region. Neurath's image portrays a vegetation-covered hillside, with natural and human-made features such as caves and buildings but the visual style is very different from Ravilious', whose "Wilmington Giant" captures the texture of the landscape by providing a three-dimensional impression of the contours of the hillside with line and shading. Neurath's image is stylistically simplified: the contours of the hill are smoothed into a two-dimensional, symmetrical dome. The hill is covered with grass represented by a repeated, graphic pattern, with groups of green pictogram trees, and buildings in contrasting red.

The success of the Puffin Picture Books created a precedent for experimental children's publishing in the UK during the 1940s. It was supported by advances in

4 Originally titled "Downland Man", Ravilious sent a dummy of the book and sample illustrations to Carrington, who intended to publish it as a Puffin Picture Book in 1941. By then, Ravilious was working as a war artist and the book was not completed before his death in 1942, and therefore was not published as part of the early Puffin series. The dummy was discovered in 2010 and the "lost Puffin" was completed, based on letters and sketches between Carrington and Ravilious, and published by Design for Today in co-operation with The Penguin Collectors Society in 2019 (Pearson 2019).

5 As a war artist, he documented planes, submarines, and ships. For more information, see: "Ravilious: Submarine" by James Russell.

Figure 2: The Wilmington Giant, a chalk figure on the South Downs, ill. Eric Ravilious, 1939. Photo credit: Bridgeman Images.

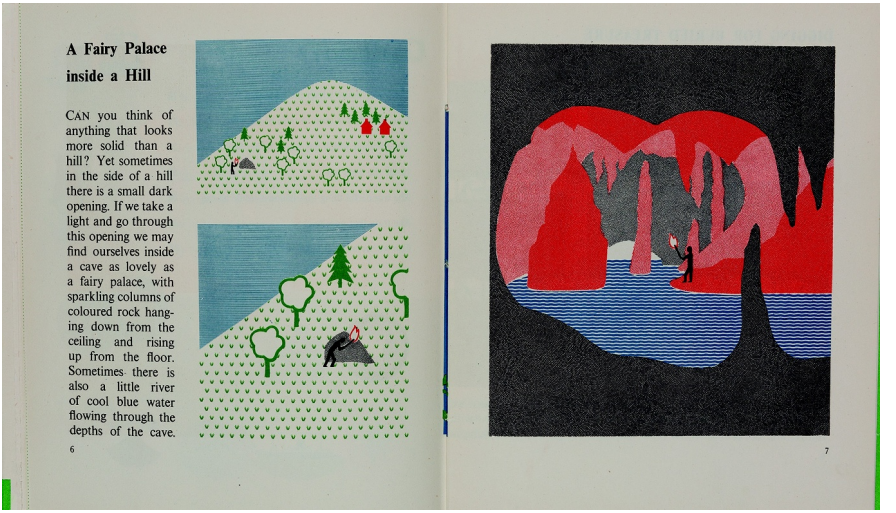

Figure 3: A hillside in *If You Could See Inside* (1948) by Marie Neurath. Otto and Marie Neurath Isotype Collection, University of Reading.

print and production technology, and by developments in art and design education in the interwar years. This success during the early years created a trend for high-quality, dynamic, and innovative children's picturebook publishing. To reiterate Thompson, staff at other publishers would have been looking over their shoulder to see what their competitors were doing and considering ways of building on that in their own lists, as they looked for ways of developing new work. It seems likely that the success of the early Puffin Picture Books created a space for children's nonfiction lists to grow and develop new ways of communicating information. The influence of French and Soviet children's books on the Puffin Picture Books has been documented (for example, see Baines (2010); Pearson (2010)), however, Puffin Picture Books also influenced other publishers, such as Max Parrish and his book packager,[6] Adprint, who built on Puffin's work in the nonfiction domain and brought a European modern aesthetic to children's publishing in the UK, as is evident from their publication of Marie Neurath's children's books. According to Paul Stiff, "its trial and error development of a mixture of prefabricated modular elements and language-like attributes: clearly-articulated rules for the combination of these elements, segmentation and reduced iconicity" made the Isotype "modern" (2007, 35). Marie Neurath's children's books were a development of her work in Vienna with her husband, Otto Neurath; however, given the environment created by other publishers in the UK at that time they found a ready market there.

3 Isotype characteristics and children's books

Marie Neurath created over 80 children's books between 1948 and her retirement in 1971. These give an indication of the extent of Neurath's engagement with the universal symbols of the Isotype to explain complex ideas to a young audience. The different techniques and approaches used by the Isotype Institute have been outlined by Sue Walker (2014), and include the use of cross-sections, magnification, and color coding. For example, in *Railways under London*, first published in 1948 (Walker 2013b), all vehicles, including trains, buses, underground trains, taxis, and cars are consistently colored red throughout the book. Aimed at children aged 9–12, the book provided information on how the London Underground worked, including facts about brakes, elevators, automatic doors on trains, and

6 The role of the book packager was created during the war to facilitate book production before titles were passed on to the publisher for sale and distribution (Stevenson 2010).

ticket machines. It attracted critical acclaim and in 1949 was chosen as one of the 50 best British books of the year by the National Book League.

A guiding principle of Marie Neurath's method was to focus on well-researched and highly accurate content. She was meticulous in her use of a variety of sources to confirm technical accuracy. In a retrospective reflection on the Isotype approach from the 1920s onwards, Marie Neurath describes how the Isotype charts developed and were tested in several settings (Neurath and Kinross 2008): for example, school groups at the museum used the charts to answer questions, which gave the team of transformers feedback on how to arrange data for ease of use (Neurath 1974).

Influenced in part by Carrington's Puffin Picture Books (Walker 2012), the Isotype children's books were created in collaboration with Adprint and published under the imprint Max Parrish. Adprint, a book packager, was founded in 1937 by Wolfgang Foges and Walter Neurath (no relation of Otto Neurath, Walter Neurath went on to found Thames and Hudson). Book packagers work with several different publishing companies; the King Penguin series, for example, was launched by Allen Lane in association with Adprint in 1939 (Stevenson 2010, 134). Walter Neurath, as production manager, understood the importance of the integration of text and images on a double-page spread (Walker 2012). The process of creating these books and Marie Neurath's role as a "transformer" has been documented by Neurath and Kinross (2008) and Walker (2014, 2017).

Neurath's books from the 1940s reflect her utilization of the Isotype method of image creation in order to communicate complex information in an accessible manner. Drawing on approaches derived from the visual presentation of statistics and data charts, these early forms of infographics pioneered methods of simplifying complex information by visual means. This problem-solving process in relation to image-making continues to hold interest for graphic designers today, who use a series of tools or techniques primarily developed to convert graphic design intended to communicate statistical information into another subject area or medium.

Devised with the intention of creating a universal visual language, Isotype was developed during the 1920s and 1930s at the Museum for Social and Economic Affairs in Vienna, Austria, under the leadership of Otto Neurath and his collaborator Marie Neurath to depict information such as unemployment statistics in a pictorial way that allowed the reader to interpret the data quickly and easily. Otto Neurath did not have a design background, and Isotype was content-first in their approach: as Twyman points out, "the Isotype Movement provides the best example I know of graphic design innovations stemming from the need for social reconstruction" (1975, 7–8). Schematic shape and flat color are used to produce simplified representations of a data set in the form of a pictogram.

From a graphic design perspective, these simplified images were effective in a nonfiction context: as Lupton asserts, "flatness suggests a factual honesty, as opposed to the illusion of a perspective drawing" and they offer "a natural cast rather than a cultural interpretation" (1986, 54), and their legacy can still be seen today in road signs and information signs such as the conventional use of a stylized, simplified image of a suitcase at an airport to represent a luggage collection point. As well as applying their concepts in Vienna, the Neuraths looked for international opportunities for their work. In 1938, Otto Neurath travelled to the USA, where he launched a series of information charts that showed how to help prevent the spread of tuberculosis. The team also collaborated with partners in the Soviet Union to create statistical graphics, covering topics such as the Five-Year Plan and developments in coal and steel. In the 1930s, the Neuraths moved, first to The Hague, and then on to the UK. They began to explore new applications for the Isotype method that they had devised and to experiment with different ways of presenting information.

The subject matter of the Neuraths at this stage centered on aspects of social change, for example, through communicating information on the spread of infectious diseases, or on how a household can salvage scrap materials. One of their new approaches can be seen in an Isotype animated film commissioned by the UK Ministry of Information. *A Few Ounces a Day* drew attention to the importance of limiting the stream of goods coming from the USA by ship in 1940–1941, since many of these convoys were destroyed in transit by German vessels (Jansen 2009, 233). Produced by Paul Rotha, the film highlights the need for households to save scrap such as bones, lightbulbs, and packaging in order to replace some of the material that was lost at sea in transit to the UK. The use of a pictogram to represent an item such as a ship, a crate, or a burlap sack, at times repeated as in, for example, a group of identical ships at sea, exploits techniques that they had developed at the Museum for Social and Economic Affairs in Vienna to provide a visually effective way of describing multiple ships of cargo crossing the Atlantic Ocean. However, as the production was outsourced, the Neuraths were not always fully satisfied with the results (Burke 2013, 377). A chart is often designed as a stand-alone object, whereas a book or animation consists of sequences which require a different approach, both in terms of design and in terms of curating a coherent whole. Each double-page spread of a book is viewed in isolation, but also in the context of the preceding and subsequent spreads. It could be argued that the repetition of universal pictograms gives a strong sense of cohesiveness throughout a book.

4 *Just Boxes* and *If You Could See Inside*

In 1944, the Neuraths created the prototype for *Just Boxes*. The premise behind this book was that "[. . .] modern implements present themselves usually in boxes, therefore one has to look into the box to see how they work" (Otto Neurath 1944). Although unpublished, this prototype is a significant example as it shows the developmental work and consideration apparent in the Neuraths' exploration of a new medium in the form of a children's book. Similarly to early Puffin Picture Books, the Neurath's early prototype is of note as it offers insights into their early considerations. The prototype covers numerous "boxes", including a refrigerator (a cold box), a cooker (a hot box) and a house (a living box). This collaborative prototype formed the basis of Marie Neurath's first children's book. After Otto Neurath's death in 1945, Marie Neurath moved from Oxford to London and continued their work with Isotype, and in October 1948, *If You Could See Inside*[7] was published. Printed in four-color offset lithography,[8] this book comprises 27 full color pages, a board cover, cloth spine and a jacket. The content includes items such as a volcano (a fiery mountain), a castle under siege, a mole's tunnel, a hen's embryo growing inside an egg and a house. Color is employed to convey meaning and extraneous details are omitted. As in the Neuraths' previous Isotype publications, repeated images of the same pictogram are utilized in the spreads, for example, of the mole burrowing underground in its tunnel. A development on the idea of *Just Boxes*, the concept behind Marie Neurath's first book, *If You Could See Inside*, is based on "cutting through"; if you cut through something such as a volcano, an egg, a house, or a mole's tunnel with a magic knife, this is what you would see. The topics selected for this title include both human-made objects such as a house, and aspects of natural science such as the inside of a wasp's nest. The visual design follows what Ellen Lupton refers to as "Machine esthetics [. . .] clean, logical, transparent, free of redundancy" that requires the "elimination of [. . .] perspective and internal features" (1986, 54–55), while added elements reflect a more fluid approach. For example, a pictogram of a cross section of a house is made up of straight lines depicting the walls, stairs, plumbing and foundations that provide a clear explanation of how a house is constructed (Figure 4). However, the image also contains silhouettes of furniture, people, and a cat.

7 A digitized version of the book can be seen here: https://www.marieneurath.org/ (27 July 2024).
8 In offset lithography the image is transferred or 'offset' from the plate to a rubber blanket or roller before it is printed on paper, so the final is effectively a print of a print. This allow for the image to be created as it would appear on the paper (the print is in reverse if printed directly from the plate). Offset printing can help protect the plate, as the print is taken from an intermediary surface rather than directly from the plate.

While this information could be argued to be superfluous, perhaps suggesting limitations of the "machine aesthetics", it helps the viewer to identify the house as a dwelling rather than a generic building and the child to relate to it as a home. Otto Neurath's idea of "engaging" a child with a repeated image such as a black cat is also pertinent; in a comment about series and the use of common images across different titles, he writes: "one may use again and again the same house, and a certain animal, e.g. a black cat may appear again and again, partly not as a leading actor" (Neurath 1944). Echoes of this idea can be seen in later children's books, such as the recurring yellow duck hiding on each page in Stephen Cartwright's illustrations for Usborne Books.

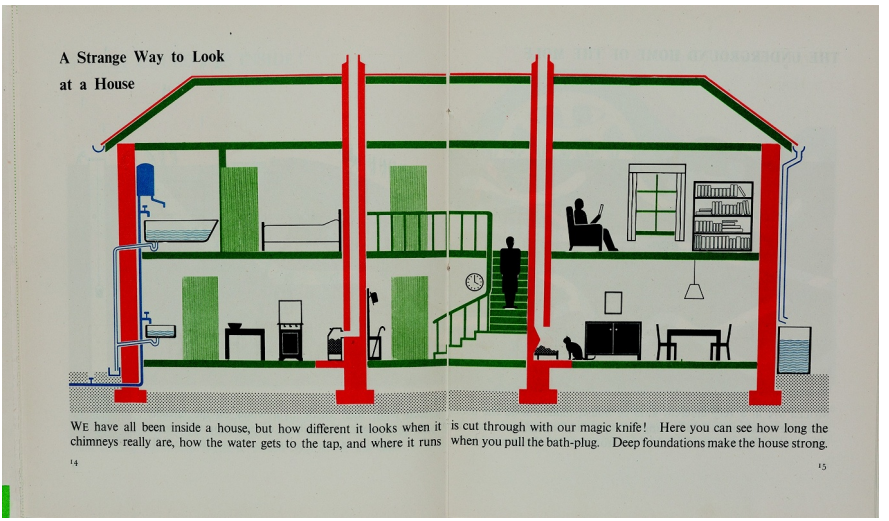

Figure 4: *If You Could See Inside* (1948) by Marie Neurath. The image shows a cross-section of a house showing stylized foundations, plumbing, and chimneys. Otto and Marie Neurath Isotype Collection, University of Reading.

A challenge for the design of Isotype pictograms arises from the transformation of complex content into stylized schematic simplicity, a job undertaken by the role of the 'transformer' in the collaborative process at the Isotype Institute. The content of Marie Neurath's early books, that include mechanics and the natural world, is broadly similar to that of the early Puffin Picture Books, but her use of bold graphic shapes and strong primary colors diverge visually from them. Phil Baines contrasts Neurath's diagram of a house with Puffin's *Building a House* (1949), which also features a cross section of a house showing foundations, plumbing, and internal structure in a more complex three-dimensional image and

points out that the difference lies in the Isotype Institute's simplification of technical information from three-dimensional to two-dimensional image and omission of details such as the external façade, detailed information on the positioning of the plumbing pipes and methodical descriptions of the parts of the chimney. In the Puffin Picture Book, the content is more technical, and Baines speculates that the audience could be professional engineers, rather than children (2010, 44). Richard Leacroft, the author and illustrator for *Building a House*, was an architect by trade. He wrote several books throughout his life for both adults and children, which contain detailed, accurate, isometric "cut-away" illustrations of both the inside and the outside of the structure. His book *The Development of the English Playhouse* (1973), which is recognized as one of the most informative and authoritative books in its field, is particularly noted for its detailed and accurate illustrations (V&A Archives Collection, no date).

Perhaps this is where the "Isotype exemplifies a project common to much modern art and design – the attempt to eclipse interpretation with perception, to replace reading with seeing" (Lupton 1986, 50). The "world language" of the Isotype makes cultural references universal, rather than specific, and the sense of "the spirit of place", discussed above in relation to Ravilious' work, disappears.

5 Conclusion

While there are similarities in both content and arguably the approach to creating content between some titles of the Puffin Picture Books and Neurath's children's picturebooks published in the UK in the 1940s, their graphic styles are very different. It could be argued that while the Isotype approach offers a distinctive visual language that has its roots in the desire for 'social reconstruction', an aspiration for readers to engage with social progress can also be seen in the Puffin Picture Books published during this era. The Puffin Picture Books brought an English modernist approach to children's book creation in their experimentation with new technologies and "a specifically British response to avant-garde arts [. . .] in which overthrowing convention and reinvigorating the arts was achieved through re-engaging with tradition and reconnecting with place" (Reynolds 2016, 103). In contrast, Neurath brought a use of flat, primary colors, and simplified graphics. Her work reflects an approach that makes information more accessible, with social progress encouraged through understanding rather than radicalization. Her visual icons of people, forexample, are simplified yet relatable, rather like a peg doll or the wooden figurines of a child's board game, and they engage in familiar activities like walking upstairs or sitting in front of a fire. The similari-

ties in presentation between the publishers Puffin Picture Books and Max Parrish offer accessibility to nonfiction content, while allowing the reader/viewer scope to explore it in visually different ways. As Thompson argues, the way publishers are influenced by each other helps drive forward new approaches and innovation. The publication of facsimile editions, and in some cases the publication of 'lost' early work, such as *White Horses,* suggests that the problem-solving process involving image-making that illustrators used in their books in the 1940s to communicate complex information in an accessible manner still holds interest today. Similarly, techniques that Neurath pioneered such as the use of striking, graphically bold shapes combined with a flat color palette can still be seen in both the wider field of graphic design and in UK nonfiction children's publishing today.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Hale, Kathleen. *Orlando the Marmalade Cat*. London: Country Life, 1938.
Leacroft, Richard. *Building a House*. London: Puffin Picture Books, 1949.
Leacroft, Richard. *The Development of the English Playhouse*. London: Methuen, 1973.
LeWitt, Jan, and George Him. *The Football's Revolt*. London: Country Life 1939.
Marx, Enid. *The Pigeon Ace*. London: Faber and Faber, 1943.
Neurath, Otto, and Marie Neurath. *Just Boxes*. Unpublished. 1944.
Neurath, Marie. *If You Could See Inside*. London: Max Parrish Books, 1948.
Neurath, Marie. *Railways under London*. London: Max Parrish Books, 1948.
Neurath, Otto, and Marie Neurath. *A Few Ounces a Day*. Ministry of Information, (Paul Rotha Productions) 1941. https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060006290 (26 November 2023).
Richards, J. M. *High Street.* Ill. Eric Ravilious. London: Country Life, 1938.
Ravilious, Eric, and Alice Pattullo. *White Horses*. London: Design for Today and the Penguin Collectors Society, 2019.

Secondary sources

Baines, Phil. *Puffin by Design: 70 Years of Imagination 1940–2010*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2010.
Binyon, Helen. *Eric Ravilious: Memoir of an Artist*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1983.
Burke, Christopher. "Animated Isotype on Film, 1941–47." *Isotype: Design and Contexts 1925–1971*. Eds. Christopher Burke, Eric Kindel, and Sue Walker. London: Hyphen Press, 2013. 366–389.
Carrington, Noel. "The Modern British Artist in British Industry." *Design* 47.4 (1945): 5.
Cory-Wright, Harriet. "The marks and modes of Modernism: The Puffin Picture Books (1940–1965)." *The Journal of Illustration* 1.2 (2014): 257–273.

Day, Helen. *Ladybird Books: Complete List*. https://ladybirdflyawayhome.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Complete-Ladybird-list-1940-1980s-Feb-2023.pdf (23 May 2023).
Friend, Andy. *Ravilious & Co: The Pattern of Friendship*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2018.
Goga, Nina,Sarah Hoem Iversen, and Anne-Stefi Teigland. "Introduction." *Verbal and Visual Strategies in Nonfiction Picturebooks: Theoretical and Analytical Approaches*. Eds. Nina Goga, Sarah Hoem Iversen, and Anne-Stefi Teigland. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 2021. 1–6.
Hawkins, Richard. "An outbreak of talent: The radical conservatism of Eric Ravilious and his friends." *TLS. Times Literary Supplement*, 4 August 2017.
Jackson, Sheila. "A Puffin Illustrator of the Forties." *Signal* 70 (1993): 37–45.
Jansen, Wim. "Neurath, Arntz and ISOTYPE: The Legacy in Art, Design and Statistics." *Journal of Design History* 22.3 (2009): 227–242.
Lupton, Ellen. "Reading Isotype." *Design Issues* 3.2 (1986): 47–58.
Neurath, Marie. "Isotype." *Instructional Science* 3.2 (1974): 127–150.
Neurath, Marie, and Robin Kinross. *The Transformer: Principles of Making Isotype Charts*. London: Hyphen Press, 2008.
Neurath, Otto. "Typescript synopsis." 1944. https://www.marieneurath.org/#early-ideas (27 July 2022).
Our Story (no date) *Penguin*. https://www.penguin.com/our-story-timeline/ (14 November 2022).
Pearson, Joe. *Drawn Direct to the Plate: Noel Carrington and the Puffin Picture Books*. London: Penguin Collectors' Society, 2010.
Pearson, Joe. "Introduction." In *White Horses* by Eric Ravilious and Alice Pattullo. Design for Today and the Penguin Collector's Society London, 2019: inside dust jacket.
Powers, Alan. *Eric Ravilious: Artist and Designer*. London: Lund Humphries, 2013.
Powers, Alan. "A Star in his Firmament." *Ravilious & Co.: The Pattern of Friendship*. Ed. Andy Friend. London: Thames and Hudson, 2018. 7–16.
Reynolds, Kimberley. *Left Out: The forgotten tradition of radical publishing for children in Britain 1910–1949*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
Stevenson, Iain. *Book Makers: British Publishing in the Twentieth Century*. London: British Library, 2010.
Stiff, Paul. "Showing a New World in 1942: The Gentle Modernity of Puffin Picture Books." *Design Issues* 23.4 (2007): 22–38.
Sutliff Sanders, Joe. *A Literature of Questions: Nonfiction for the Critical Child*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.
Thompson, John B. *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business of the Twenty-First Century*. 2nd ed. London: Polity, 2012.
Twyman, Michael. "The significance of Isotype." *Graphic Communication through Isotype*. *Exhibition Catalogue*. Ed. Michael Twyman. Reading: University of Reading, 1975. 7–17.
Walker, Sue. "Explaining History to Children: Otto and Marie Neurath's Work on the Visual History of Mankind." *Journal of Design History* 2.4 (2012): 345–362.
Walker, Sue. *Railways under London*. https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/typography-at-reading/2013/01/09/railways-under-london/ (2 July 2023) (2013b).
Walker, Sue. "Isotype children's books: approaches to visual organisation and graphic techniques for explanation." *Blucher Design Proceedings* 1.2 (2014): 1–13.
Walker, Sue. "Marie Neurath: designing information books for young people." *Information Design Research and Practice*. Eds. Alison Black, Ole Lund, Paul Luna, and Sue Walker. London: Routledge, 2017. 117–126.
Wright, Kate. "The Development of Puffin Books." *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* 47.1 (2009): 40–45.
Zeegen, Lawrence. *Ladybird by Design: 100 Years of Words and Pictures*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2015.