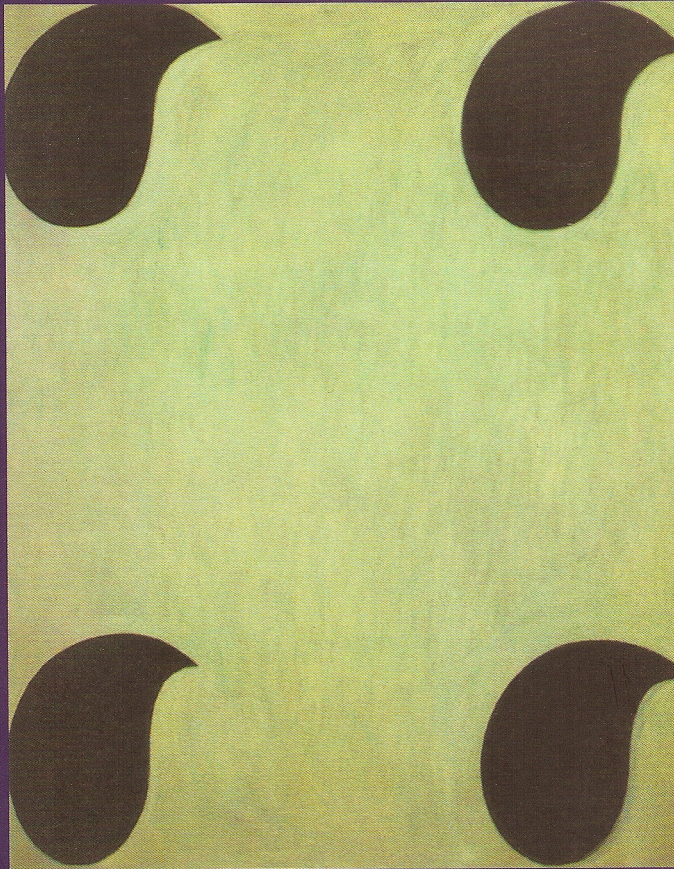


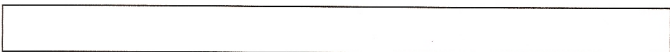
LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS



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ON

LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Edited by **FREDERICO PEREIRA**

Helsinki | Finland
June 28 > July 3 | 2006

Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Culture (SUNY-Buffalo, USA)
Institute for the Psychological Study of the Arts (University of Florida, USA)
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P A P E R S

Representations of elderly in childish illustrated books

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*KARAKITSIOS ANDREAS (**)*

OBJECTIVES, PROCEDURE AND RESEARCH TOOLS OF THE PROJECT

The objective of the undertaken paper focuses on the representation of the aged in the pictures of illustrated books of children's literature which circulated in Greece during the publications of 2004. In this project, various representations of grandfathers and grandmothers, their facial characteristics, the roles and activities they undertake, their personalities and the relationships they develop with the other members of the family, are closely examined. The representations of the aged are traced exclusively in the distinctive "code" of illustration which is usually prolific in children's illustrated books.

Children's books, fiction and non-fiction, and illustrated ones influence in various ways what models children have and their attitude towards the elders, since the social and political actualities and the resulting ideology of the mainstream are reflected in them (P. Hunt, 2001). The content of the illustrations of children's books makes up a distinct sort of representation of a cultural reality which both individuals and organized social groups process, promulgate and simultaneously reveal the ideological and cultural space within which they can be identified and placed. Illustration, much like children's literary narration, reproduces and propagates along the same general lines the ideas, the values, the models, the expectations and the attitudes of a group but also of the whole of society of an era during a specific point in time. At the same time though, because illustrations address readers who are children, they assume a specific significance, since a child is more susceptible with regards to an adult reader and furthermore the child as a public social symbol has acquired a tremendous symbolic meaning. It is quite natural for the "adventure" of children's illustrations just like the "adventure" of narration both of which address children to maintain a relevant sensitivity and care which, in certain

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circumstances, can be turned into a painful self-censorship every time that the main receiver of the messages is the young reader.

Within a general framework, reading and examining the research material is expected to offer a wide range of “image” information sufficient for the objectives of the project. With the help of various readings of illustrations which are described in detail in the chapter of methodology, the components of an approach which confronts illustration as a reservoir of cultural practices and a way of inquiry on topics which specialize in the stereotypes and the characteristic features of the aged emerge. Studying thus the “image” illustrations in the vicinity of the illustrated children’s book where the receiver is usually and mainly the young child of a certain age, can offer much towards the understanding of the doubtful social functions and the human attitudes they include, meaning stereotypes, attitudes, values and conceptions. It is also understandable that the process of the representation of the world and in specific that of the aged which is attempted through illustrations can not be a “neutral” representation of the social reality, but a reproductive mechanism of the mainstream culture and of the social hierarchy. In specific, the “code” of children’s illustrations employs strategies and tactics which persuade rather easily about what’s self-evident and what’s truly logical, something which is easily acceptable as well since it is not threatened by any shadows of a doubt as it is registered in the special group of those cultural products which are placed among children’s literature.

Finally, in this rather fluid state, this stereotypical image of the aged is turned into a generalization, it becomes simplified, consolidated and more often than not it ends up being a national or cultural stereotype. Nowadays, these sorts of generalizations formulate a rather complicate network of mutual and successive feedback which is depicted in a clearly discernible manner mainly by the media. Children’s literature, besides other symbolic means of expression and representation, had always played and still plays a very significant part in the function of this network and chiefly in its illustrations because it can transfer and depict in the long term the stereotypical image of the portraits of the aged in contrast to the mass media whose function is rather sharp and in the short term.

Confronting literary production and the corresponding illustration as empirical data which transcends the limits of traditional philological analyses is evidently no novelty. Vygotski’s analyses on the work of Shakespeare (1915/1972) and the acceptance of Piaget’s model of development by Lucien Goldman (1977) and the sociology of literature could make up the most characteristic expressions of an inquiring direction which jeopardizes the direct incorporation of empirical and philological data aiming at the analysis of the social structures and the processes of the social formulations of subjectivity.

Historically talking, children’s literature functioned as an attempt of registering the positive characteristics of the aged mainly due to a strong sense of programming which serves fundamental rationales and expectations of both the educational system and the organized society. It is commonly accepted that the existence of the aged in children’s literary texts is prolific and virtually imperative and useful in many ways. A typical reading of the topics dealt with in children’s literature proves the above mentioned points without making any special analyses. In special research conducted in Western Europe it is evident that the portrait of grandfathers and grandmothers which has always been stereotypical and unbelievably positive is also impressed with essential and occasionally leading way in the children’s literary work (E. Ansello, 1977). A formal reading of issues of children’s literature without specialised analyses proves the above ascertainments (H. Sakellariou, 1987; B. Anagnostopoulos, 1996).

In Greece, similar research has been restricted in school textbooks, “My Language” of elementary school and the elders are portrayed usually within the framework of representations of the family and the roles the two sexes assume (D. Makrinioti, 1986; A. Frangoudaki, 1979; D. Anagnostopoulou, 2002) which verify in a way the positive factor in the corresponding portraits of greek grandfathers and grandmothers. Their significant role in the function of the family is also established, with the grandmother playing a greater role in the field of sentiment and the grandfather in a spiritual manner.

Approximately 53 children’s literary and illustrated books were chosen and analyzed whose writers and illustrators were Greek. The choice of the books was made from the public libraries, public and private schools and the only criterion was that the book was in at least three public libraries and three schools. From each book, the most representative picture and the illustrations of the elders

were chosen and they were divided into three categories. The first contained pictures with representations of the grandfather, the second with the grandmothers and the third with both. The year 2004 was chosen as an exceptionally productive period of publication of children's illustrated books.

As it is the case in all kinds and genres of literature and children's literature in specific, the same applies in the case of defining the illustrated book where the current definitions are inadequate and of different content and significance from one country to the next. However, the definition of the illustrated book is generally accepted and it incorporates three basic characteristics. Firstly the term children's, meaning that the basic receptor is the child-reader (proficient or not), second, the term literary, meaning the presence of the language code in its literary dimension and third, the image, meaning the presence of the code of images. Quite naturally, the term "children's illustrated book" can be described as the combination of two different codes, that of language or literary dimension and that of illustration having as a determining characteristic the qualitative and the quantitative presence of the illustration in the presentation of the subject matter of the book beyond the language code used (G. Kitsaras, 1993).

The answer to the question which code prevails is never easy or useful. The role and the significance of the illustration in the development of the content is a complicate and intricate process. Along general lines the illustration sometimes follows the philosophy of the representation of the messages of the text, usually reinforcing it, and at other times it enhances it and suggests a different reading (M. Kanatsouli, 1999). New categories are formulated keeping in mind the primary or secondary role played by the illustrations in the book. When the logic which prevails behind the illustration moves somewhere between the borders of an illustrative and an interpretive function of the text, then obviously its role is accompanying and secondary in regards to the text's representation of messages and it consists a distinct and well-defined category of "children's illustrated book", where the basic role is held by the code of language used. However, when the role and significance of the image and the illustration is determining and direct and it practically negates the corresponding role of language, meaning there is no literary text or if it does exist its role is confined to titles and auxiliary captions of the illustration, then a new category of children's book is formulated which corresponds to the term *picture book* which is widely used (A. Karakitsios, 1993).

In general the term "children's illustrated book" is considered an easy reading material for the ages between three (3) and nine (9). The most important events and happenings as well as the most important characters are depicted with the use of pictures. Its size never exceeds 20 to 25 pages and it is directed to non readers, non proficient or primary readers. If a book has few illustrations it is directed to older children while an abundance of illustrations turns the book into reading material for younger children who do not possess developed reading abilities. In this case, the illustrations function as vehicles of meanings and the young children-readers express themselves more through the illustrations, in other words they present their feelings and thoughts more through images and less or not at all through the text (D. Anagnostopoulou, 2002)

The method of analysis used in this study is based on *context analysis* (M. Vamvoukas, 1998). With this method the material is classified in fundamental categories which present the text concentrated and achieve thus up to a certain degree the substitution of subjective esteem with objective analysis. Certain fundamental categories were chosen which became special gauging categories and were changed into quantitative categories such as: physical characteristics of grandfathers and grandmothers, accessories used in their appearance, their distinctive activities and the correlation with the roles they undertake. In the cases where more than one of facial features coincides, for example beards or moustaches, the prevailing choice was marked. When in a book there were many representations of grandparents, the most representative one was chosen. In addition other factors were investigated such as the visual angle through which the elders are represented (face to face, side-view, from the back) their physique, the kind of people grandparents come in contact with and finally the visual angle of the representation.

SENIOR CITIZENS: SEMANTICS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Being a senior citizen is a special part of the life of most people both because of the personal experiences one gains and the impact s/he has on others. During significant eras of social development (rural, industrial and post-industrial) it has always been a remarkable aspect of organized societies. Historically one becomes a grandparent soon enough, if people have children early on and if their children become parents themselves quite young, something which isn't the case in contemporary societies (nor in greek society). Today, pressure and the impact of parameters such as a greater time spend on studies, the value and prestige that a career holds for a woman, the emergence of new attitudes for the role of the family but also the fast development of medicine, have raised a woman's age of child-bearing to around 30 years old. In the 90's the average child-bearing age of citizens in Western Europe was much higher in comparison with the 60's and 70's and supposedly the appearance of grandparents has become a slim possibility. But life expectancy has been raised to 80 and the population boom has created an enormous number of elderly people most of which is grandfathers and grandmothers. It is estimated that in the greek society the majority of the elderly plays the role of the grandparent, while this percentage is quite astonishing in the USA reaching 94% (Hooymann & Kiyak 1988). In the United Kingdom more than 50% of the population has grandchildren by the age of 54. In Italy, 38.4% of the population above 40 have grandchildren. The ratio increases according to age while grandmothers outnumber grandfathers (C. Sciplino, & P. Smith, 2004).

A first definition of the elderly concludes that it's people usually above 40 years old. Of course such a definition which is based only on age as the determining factor is probably inaccurate and rather amiss since there are individuals above 40 which do not consider themselves – and rightly so – as elderly and there are also individuals on the border of 40 who are already grandparents without being old or possessing the typical characteristics of the elderly, meaning old-age features such as grey hair, moustache, old-fashioned clothing, and social characteristics of retirement or social withdrawal.

A much more objective, safe and comprehensible definition of the elderly could be achieved if we take into consideration the exercise and function of the social role a grandparent serves. It is a fact that when grandparents have grandchildren, quite naturally a connection between two different generations is achieved, between grandparents and grandchildren, with defining roles and responsibilities, rights and duties (R. Beland, & T. Mills, 2001). When attempting to define a grandparent the most predominant role is played by the societal role of the grandparent than the actual age, which varies from generation to generation, from one society to the next, from one country to another.

In the past the social status of a grandparent was rather high and the adults received respect and esteem. In the past, the social status of the grandfather and the grandmother was quite high and people as a whole had a great respect for the adults. Rather typical and stereotypical attitudes such as “the wisdom that comes along with age” and typical dominant behaviors, such as “respect for grey hair” along with long-standing privileges such as elders sitting in the front rows of ceremonies or even in the bus and church were representative of an industrial society. It is reported that white wigs carried prestige and value to those who wore them since they functioned subconsciously as symbols of social strength and wisdom. Knowledge and wisdom were privileges of adults and mainly of the elders (J. Demos, 1987; J. Quadagno, 1999). These notions disappear in the beginning of the 20th century in greek society together with the shrinking of the rural populations and it is believed that this change is associated with a certain scorn towards those who owned land. Of course the changes and the attitudes as far as the role of the elders is concerned in connection with various social formulations and interactions among the social echelons and social groups has changed dramatically in recent years with the elders losing ground – creating a rather explosive and fluid situation where the image of the grandfather and the grandmother is mainly a negative one. In the media, the presence of the elders is borderline or nonexistent.

Today, despite all those conditions which diminish the significance of the “image” of the grandfather and the grandmother, their role remains significant (L. Janelli, 1988). Their presence affects the function of the family for various reasons. First, grandparents are able to influence in a great degree the emotional

development of their grandchildren and their self-respect (V. Adkins, 1999; M. Griff, 1999). Secondly, they can change the potential of the inner relationships of the family because their eventual development from parents to elders and grandparents imposes a new understanding of the relationships and roles with the rest of the family. Thirdly, the role of the grandparents has always been considered in the greek society as traditionally supplementary in matters that concern the grandchildren's development and upbringing and despite the continual conflicts between the different generations, the presence of the grandparents remains useful and nothing can replace it. Especially in rural and semi-urban regions, the grandparents are those who replace parents and even preschool education.

RESULTS

1. In illustrated books, representations of grandparents maintained a typical balance. Grandparents appear slightly more, 19 times to 14 illustrations with grandmothers, while in 20 illustrations both sexes appear together.

2. The typical portraits of grandparents possess the stereotypical depictions. As far as the features of the grandfather go, the most typical characteristics appear with significant fluctuations in the statistics, $\chi^2=14,7$, $p<0.01$. The majority of grandfathers ($n=21$) is depicted having grey hair, a rather large number ($n=15$) appear bold or with a receding hairline, while the combination (beard, moustache and grey hair) prevails ($n=29$). Only a smaller number of grandfathers appear with a moustache and a beard. Of course, the majority has all of the above mentioned characteristics, such as grey hair, moustache, beard and boldness – to put it briefly a very stereotypical depiction of the grandfather, very similar to a previously established image of the elderly, something that has already been noted in international studies (C. Sciplino, & P. Smith, 2005).

3. In the grandmother's outward appearance, there are remarkable characteristics which raise statistical interest, $\chi^2=13,05$, $p<0.01$. Grandmothers appear having grey hair ($n=23$). Eleven times their hair is put in a bun, a very typical and traditional tendency, especially for the grandmother who lives far from the big urban centers, while what prevails is the combination of grey hair in a bun, 7 times, $n=7$. We have to note here though a substantial differentiation with the features of the grandfather, since there are two depictions of grandmothers having black hair, a fact that foretells the relevant changes in the stereotype of the grandmother but which also keeps up with the image of the contemporary grandmother.

4. As far as the accessories that grandparents use, the following applies. In the case of the grandfather, the accessories appear with some order of escalation which carries a borderline statistical significance, $\chi^2=6,75$, $p<0,5$. Quite oddly, the presence of a cane and glasses are only slight ($n=3$ canes and $n=6$ pair of glasses). On the contrary the most popular accessory is the hat ($n=13$) and clothing apparel for going out with all the stereotypical characteristics of adult clothing (clothes, gloves, tie, belt, scarf). Quite the opposite, grandmothers wear glasses more often ($n=10$ versus $n=6$ grandfathers), and they never appear wearing clothing apparel for walking. More often than not, they are depicted ($n=5$) wearing some sort of overalls for doing household chores with an apron and ($n=9$) with a kerchief on their head, rather typical of women living in rural and mountainous regions. These variations are a result of the stereotypical notions held about the roles of the sexes in the family, incorporating all the characteristics of the Mediterranean mentality and are of a tremendous statistical interest because they prove the strength of the sexist stereotypes in the greek society.

5. The above mentioned remarks are confirmed with the examples cited. The activities that grandparents are associated with are their coexistence and cohabitation with their grandchildren, a fact that allows a number of activities and duties mainly on the side of the grandfather, because no specific activity can be reported from the side of the grandchild ($n=13$), as one might have expected. The time grandmothers spend with their grandchildren is somewhat smaller but not substantially ($n=10$). What is interesting though in the case of grandmothers is that there is a significant number of activities associated with them, all about household chores, ($n=7$), such as cooking, vacuuming, shopping, while something

similar does not apply to the grandfathers whose activities consist of walks and discussions. Furthermore, no typical or stereotypical activity appeared, such as telling fairy tales to grandchildren or giving advice and making suggestions or even cases of grandparents' lecturing and preaching their grand children, which is evident in the texts but not in the illustrations.

6. The quality of the activities is closely associated with the characteristics and the content of the coexistence. The overwhelming majority of grandparents (n=30) is depicted in company with their grandchildren, and a rather large number (n=14) is depicted only together with the adult members of the family (n=7). The figures are statistically significant, ($\chi^2=16$, $2<0.001$). As far as the visual angle of the representation it is typical. The majority of illustrators prefers a depiction of $\frac{3}{4}$, probably for technical reasons (n=23) in contrast to other choices en face (n=9) and side-view (n=5) with a statistical consistency, $\chi^2=13,7$, $p<0.001$). The same can not be said about the representation of the grandmothers, where the subsequent choices (11,8 and 15) show no statistical differences.

As far as the representation of grandfathers and grandmothers is concerned in matters of their physique there is an element of surprise – their health is satisfactory since in both sexes there are only minor references to health problems (8 grandparents and 9 grandmothers), while representations with no health problems are 31 and 25.

Finally, the manner of illustration that prevails is the one which is less realistic and more interpretive/symbolic (n=12 versus n=41). It also should be noted that there only a few representations of animals with human features.

CONCLUSIONS

This study had been designed to analyze the content of illustrations in children's illustrated books of a specific year of publication aiming to establish and record the representation of the elderly and in specific to outline and to analyze the roles, the activities and the outward characteristics of grandparents. Having in mind the absence of similar studies in greek literature, a succinct and detecting logic has been used with the ultimate goal of recording first and later examining the particular characteristics of "images" relating to the elderly. Looking at our results we are enabled to focus our observations on specific, rather simple, conclusions.

1. The first unaffected conclusion is a quite natural consequence without presenting any surprises and it pertains to the emergence of small but persistent changes and differentiations in the "image" of the grandparents. When we think of grandparents the usual images that come to mind first depict a grey-haired man or woman sitting on a rocking chair and, depending on their sex, either playing ball with his grandchildren or digging in the garden or making dinner or cookies or tidying around the house helping a daughter or accompanying grandchildren to games, etc. Moreover, quite generally and stereotypically expectations record and chose images of old people with evident the passage of time on their faces, in other words tired people sitting in their armchairs or on their couch and images of retired old people without an active professional life, even though both grandparents are not always that old and they actually never indulge in the activities which the above mentioned stereotypical images depicted. These stereotypical images are a rather rare sight that goes unconfirmed.

In specific, a latent shift in many typical stereotypes is evident. Grandparents are depicted having up to a certain degree typical and traditional roles, such as conversing and coexisting with grandchildren and the least activity with the rest of the family. But there are some changes in their representation which are characteristic of the times. It is surprising that there is an absence of activities that the grandfather could partake, showing a grandfather who indulges in sitting around the house, reading his paper or watching TV – activities of a man who holds a special place in the family. It is also surprising that another typical image is missing that of the grandparent reading the fairy tale to his/her grandchildren. The stereotype that does not seem to undergo any changes is that of the grandmother's role and activities, who appears to participate actively only in the household chores. It is quite disconcerting to realize that the elderly are portrayed as coexisting either with their grandchildren or alone. This states the total

marginalization of the elderly even in the greek society. The sudden and fast shift from an extended family to a nuclear family seems to have affected substantially the quality of the presence (occurrence, position) of the grandparents in the house.

2. The second conclusion we have reached is that in general the representations of the grandparents lead to the formation of a homogenous group with specific outward characteristics and specific roles for both sexes, even though in the appearance of the grandmother certain elements indicative of the recent changes have seeped into the illustrations. In opposition to the typical, overwhelming representation of the grandmother with her hair in a bun or in a kerchief (an indication of cultural differentiation) and grey hair, a few grandmothers are depicted with black or blonde hair and with clothing that does not refer to formal outings and occasions. It seems that the illustrators of children's books, just like writers, portray in their work the stereotypes of the mainstream and of the dominant ideology. But in comparison with the writers, they only slightly depict the changes that have taken place – the latter though, develop and record in the same texts equal behaviors between the two sexes.

3. The third conclusion is connected to the absence of the elderly who are sick or disabled and in general weak. The overwhelming majority of the elderly in children's books is depicted as enjoying physical well-being without illnesses and disabilities, which is of course associated with the improvement of medical services towards the elderly but also with the general "image" of a healthy elder. Only in two instances, and not that clearly either, the picture of death is depicted, and the representation has a somewhat neutral element, which is achieved due to the absence of frightened looks and sad faces of the people in the picture. A realistic or just a simple presentation of such typical scenes is very interesting as well as all the social changes that have occurred during the last years in the roles of grandfathers and grandmothers, because children (the readers of books) from early on develop their ideas about the elderly and react as they deem proper, adopting or rejecting stereotypical attitudes. It is also rather useful to assume that a process of re-socialization is necessary in order for the older children to be helped to uproot negative myths or tendencies concerning the process of aging. It is also useful for the child to become familiar slowly with the concept of old age and to be able gradually to accept the process of growing old and confront easily a sick grandparent.

4. No elders of other ethnic or cultural groups are depicted nor any grandchildren of the same groups. No trace of class distinctions (poor/rich grandparent) is evident.

5. Finally as far as personalities are concerned (this is confirmed by the text more than by the illustration) it seems that contemporary children's literature continues to depict positively grandparents and to establish a distinct and always positive acceptance of the elderly within the greek family.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The field of study could be upgraded with the analysis of the extent of identification between the portraits of the grandparents in the books and illustrations that have been used, in other words an analytical correlation between the two different codes of illustration and literary text. Moreover the future research could focus on the differences, if any, between Greek and illustrators of other nationalities (cross-cultural comparison) but also on the changes or shifts that have already occurred in recent years, attempting comparative analysis of children's illustrated books of the previous century and the present one.

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For more information about Grandparenthood: <http://www.gold.ac.uk/research/rtn>.

APPENDIX^(*)

- *My best friend*, C. Boulotis / B. Papageorgiou, Patakis.
- *The town with the rainbow*, C. Boulotis / D. Karapanou, Patakis.
- *A little kiss travels*, A. Markopoulou - K. Koufopoulou / E. Vavouri, Papadopoulos.
- *No, no do not give up*, C. Chatoglou / K. Theodorou, Secondary Education address of country of Chios.
- *The washing of Santa Claus*, I. Kiritsi / E. Vavouri, Papadopoulos.
- *The life of our Saints (6)*, S. Gourioti / E. Gourioti, Orthodoxi Kipseli.
- *Europe's abduction*, B. Michailaki / C. Tagari, Diaplasi.
- *The fox and the crow*, N. Chounos / C. Varlamos, Angira.
- *Strawberrystory: a history full of love, teardrops and little strawberries*, R. Vagiani / Artoon, Kedros.
- *The saint Dimitrios and the refugees children*, M. Vigopoulou / C. Gousidis, Akritis.
- *The egoist giant*, Wilde O. (transl. D. Bourani) / K. Veroutsou.

(*) The first name/s refers to the author/s of the book and the second – after the / symbol – to the illustrator/s. The last name concerns the editor. All the books have been published during the 2004 period.

- *The egoist giant*, Wilde O. (transl. E. Dimitropoulaki) / D. Psychogiou, Angira.
- *The Santa Claus in our life*, M. Vigopoulou / C. Gousidis, Akritas.
- *Santa Claus's troubles*, L. Vasiliou / D. Stamatadi, Kedros.
- *Six small big fairy tales*, A. Kokoreli / V. Papatsarouchas, Ellinika Grammata.
- *The Iasonas, the thief and the phantom*, K. Mouriki / P. Fourka, Mikri Militos.
- *Mathaios and his grandfather*, Pioumini R. (transl. V. Nika) / E. Vavouri, Patakis.
- *A baby without a name*, H. Papamoschou / E. Griva, Patakis.
- *Sweet cluster grape*, M. Goumenopoulou / E. Vavouri, Patakis.
- *Gargantua*, Rabelais F. (adaptation X. Sakellariou) / V. Grivas, Mikri Militos.
- *Popularly fairy tales from Paros and Antiparos*, G. Sergi / F. Klironomou, Livanis.
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- *Life is beautiful*, C. Giantsiou / N. Kapatsioulia, Psychogios.
- *Nikanoras the shepherd and the romeiko*, K. Ganotis / S. Giagianou, Pilos.
- *Michael Strogoff*, Jules Verne (transl. M. Karali) / L. Katsantonis, Kedros.
- *Morfoulis is sick*, A. Dasiou / E. Fragou, Mikrokosmos.
- *Minion and Pothitos prince*, Z. M. Leprins (transl. E. Lada) / E. Lada, Livanis.
- *Changing house*, A. Michalopoulou / Svetlin, Papadopoulos.
- *The tomato grandfather*, K. Doxiadi / M. Tzamboura, Papadopoulos.
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- *24 fairy tales for laughing and for teaching*, P. Pamboudi / P. Pamboudi, Roes.
- *Santa Claus goes to the war*, A. Kokoreli / N. Adrikopoulos, Ellinika Grammata.

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