

Exploring personal
narrative &
storytelling
through the
recreation of
a historical
children's fairy tale.

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Master of Design
2018



Abstract

This report discusses the main design decisions that informed the creation of my picture book 'Manting and the Emperor.' Through illustration and storytelling I have fused a specific memory from my childhood to Hans Christian Andersen's narrative of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Three key children's books helped me to understand authorship from the perspective of the illustrator/storyteller: *Where the Wild Things Are* (Maurice Sendak), *The Arrival* (Shaun Tan), and *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?* (Lauren Child). Using this knowledge, I set about creating a narrative that gave voice to my personal experience, and I hope by association, to all who read it. Underrepresentation and misrepresentation of gender and ethnicity in mainstream children's storybooks also surfaced during this research project, my character 'Manting' is very much a young Chinese girl and the heroine of my story. Combining Chinese and European cultures in the production of this book has allowed me to create bridges between personal experience and historical *fairy telling*, as well as between the cultures I inhabit.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor Sue Jowsey who guided me throughout this research journey.

I would also like to thank AUT University for offering me the opportunity to study abroad.

Introduction

“He’s got no clothes on” ... called the child. I have explored personal narrative and storytelling through the recreation of a historical children’s tale, *The Emperor’s New Clothes*. Designing this picture book has provided opportunities to research illustration, layout and narrative traits such as ‘voice’ in relation to memory. This project has involved adapting Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tale through the lens of my abiding love of children’s fairy tales. In my report, I have outlined the rationale for my selection of this well-known story, and its historical background. Through a specific childhood memory that occurred whilst reading this story, I have been able to re-interpret the moral and social issues addressed by the narrative. Designing and illustrating this picture book has allowed me first to think about how the voice of the child is often overlooked by grown-ups and to identify that there are few female, and even fewer Asian, heroines depicted in fairy tales. By analysing the work of three key children’s book authors who write and illustrate their own stories, has allowed me to position my research within a graphic tradition. Through the iterative methods of drawing and calligraphy I have playfully explored the pictorial and text-image relationships. In addition, I have considered the virtues and defects of language and how words and typography can be used to portray female and male characters, consequently using that knowledge to scaffold my design and illustrative practice into the production of this book.

Contextual Review

The historical narrative selected for this research project is based on Hans Christian Andersen's story. I selected this narrative initially for personal reasons. Born and raised in China, Andersen's tales, especially *The Emperor's New Clothes*, resonated with me. My childhood version of Andersen's fairy tales was a collected edition translated into Mandarin, first published with *The Little Mermaid* in April 1837 in Denmark.¹ *The Emperor's New Clothes* tells a story about how people start to believe the existence of something that physically doesn't exist. Wishing to hide their ignorance they agree with what others are claiming, believing that everyone else must be right. In this story, it is a child who finally speaks the truth. The child's innocence provides the revelatory climax.

This was not the first and only version of this story. The fairy tales Andersen published between 1835 and 1837 were adapted from the stories he heard when he was young.² A 1335 medieval Spanish version of this tale (*The Emperor's New Clothes*) did exist, but it was an outline from an Arab and Jewish source called *Libro de Patronio*, by Infante Don Juan Manuel that Andersen read.³ The version of *The Emperor's New Clothes* that I first read was in Chinese and as a result the translated narrative differed from Andersen's original. Tess points out that "...in England where translators worked secondhand from French or German versions of his writing and liberally rewrote or edited his tales to suit their preferences".⁴ This means the English version of Andersen's tales was not directly adapted from the Danish version, just as Andersen did not read the original source of *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

Wullschläger states: "In the Spanish version, the Moorish king is conned by fraudulent weavers who claim to make a suit which will be invisible

to any man who is not the son of his presumed father."⁵

Andersen reworked the story *The Emperor's New Clothes* based on his contemporary (19th century) interpretation of the narrative, just as I have contemporised his story for children of this era.

The Emperor's New Clothes lays out a number of moral issues which invite my personal interpretation. My parents owned a small shop when I was young. Customers would come and go, but one day, a man came to our shop wanting to buy something. He thought the product was expensive and seeing me, then 8 years old, sitting in the shop reading – he asked what I thought about the price of the goods. Innocently, I agreed with him. "Yes, it is expensive" I announced, and the customer laughed. My father however did not find it funny, getting upset with me instead for agreeing with the man. My father explained to the customer that "I was just a child and therefore did not know what I was talking about". I vividly recall being told off by my father for my innocence and what I felt was an honest response. In *The Emperor's New Clothes*, that child speaks his/her thoughts and is proved to be right.

In Every child's right to be heard,

...frequently overlooked, or rejected as inappropriate on the grounds of age and immaturity... they have been regarded as undeveloped, lacking even basic capacities for understanding, communicating and making choices. They have been powerless within their families, and often voiceless and invisible within society... As holders of rights, even the youngest children are entitled to express their views... Young children are acutely sensitive to their surroundings and very rapidly acquire understanding of the people, places and routines in their lives, along with awareness of their own unique identity...⁶

¹ Jackie Wullschläger, *Hans Christian Andersen: The Life of a Storyteller* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), 169.

² Lewis Tess, "A Drop of Bitterness: Andersen's Fairy Tales," *The Hudson Review* 54, no. 4 (January 2002): 684.

³ Wullschläger, *Hans*, 170.

⁴ Tess, "A Drop of Bitterness: Andersen's Fairy Tales," 681.

⁵ Wullschläger, *Hans*, 170.

⁶ Gerison Lansdown, *Every Child's Right to Be Heard* (London, UK: Save the Children UK, 2011), accessed May 10, 2018, https://www.unicef.org/french/adolescence/files/Every_Childs_Right_to_be_Heard.pdf, 21.

The voices and opinions of children are often overlooked by adults as it is assumed that adults have more life experience and are therefore better able to determine the difference between what is right or wrong. As a result, children's opinions and thoughts can be viewed as immature and not trustworthy. Gerison Lansdown notes, "... adults must learn to hear and see what children are saying and doing without rejecting it simply because they are young."⁷ On the contrary, their words can be most innocent, without any distracting thoughts. This story, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, amplifies the voice of the child, and criticises the behaviour of grown-ups. People can be hoodwinked by their hearts desire ignoring what they see with their eyes, preferring lies to the truth. The honesty of the child is underscored in this narrative; this is poignant in terms of my project because children and adults who read this fairy tale are able to imagine themselves as disclaimers of the truth, much like myself in my parent's shop.

Andersen had an impact on the future of children's literature by breaking with the conventions of traditional fairy tales. In the nineteenth century the intention of children's books was to reinforce morals and to educate young readers,⁸ however, Andersen created a new form of children's literature by making it accessible and entertaining.⁹ Andersen's style contained humour and colloquial language, not only because he read extensively, absorbing the essence from these stories which shaped his own vivid style,¹⁰ but also because of his background and the social changes of the 19th century.¹¹

⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁸ Wullschläger, *Hans*, 145.

⁹ Ibid., 146.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Tess, "A Drop of Bitterness: Andersen's Fairy Tales," 681.

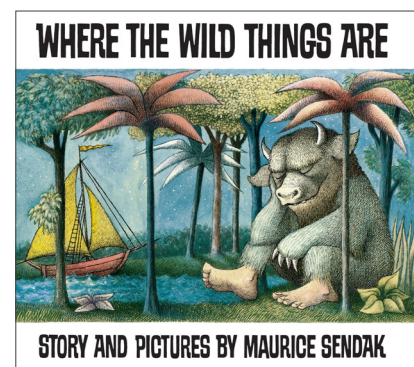


Figure 1: The cover of *Where the Wild Things Are*

Being the author and illustrator of a storybook provides the power of breaking conventional rules of storytelling. Children's book illustrator and writer, Maurice Sendak, broke many formulas of picture books with his artistry. Sendak's story, *Where the Wild Things Are*, caused a mass debate on whether his depicted 'wild things' were too intimidating for children when it was released to the public. This picture book, however, has become hugely influential

as a visual device.¹² Salisbury and Styles indicate, "what makes it a masterpiece is the way he works on many levels to convey the depth of feeling of a young protagonist through colour, form and composition."¹³ The narrative in *Where the Wild Things Are* is short and simple because Sendak's main focus was to explore the imaginative world of the main character, Max, with visual storytelling.

Like Sendak, Shaun Tan is an author of children's picturebooks, one of the most important of which is *The Arrival*. There are no words in this story; instead, Tan has depicted the narrative with a series of exquisite pictures. The story is about a man who left his family to immigrate to an unknown country, and what he has encountered in this place. Tan believed that the feelings of isolation in a strange space, with the obstacles of a foreign language, are hard to articulate simply with words. In the final production of those images, Tan's method incorporated film-making techniques rather than conventional illustration, which meant he could portray the story in a linear fashion with a number of detailed actions, helping the audience to understand the story.

In Maurice Sendak's book *Where the Wild Things Are* and Lauren Child's *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?* as it is in my own, these authors are also illustrators, enabling the use of illustration and storytelling to create a unique space. While most of the main characters in *The Emperor's New Clothes* are male, Andersen does not point out the gender of the child. I intend to fold myself into *The Emperor's New Clothes* to create my own version of how I remember this tale. This version will feature a Chinese girl as the child who says "but he has no clothes on" – a deliberate reinterpretation that gives a positive voice to self-expression. This voice stems from personal experience in my youth. With this project I want to encourage children to speak their inner voice and to feel supported by others when they have the courage to do so.

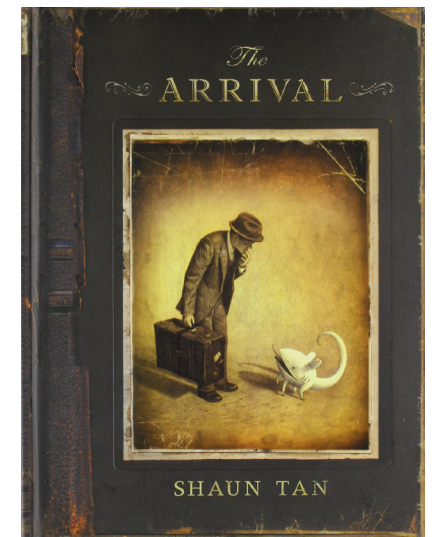


Figure 2: The cover of *The Arrival*

¹² Martin Salisbury and Morag Styles, *Children's Picturebooks: The Art of Visual Storytelling* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2012), 38.

¹³ Ibid.

Stereotypes about gender exist in children's products. Moser and Masterson state that "during early childhood children form gender schema that they use to process information in the world regarding females and males."¹⁴ Murnen et al. claim, "by the age of 2 most children label themselves as either female or male and are aware of gender distinctions."¹⁵ Many products designed and made for children – including dolls, Halloween costumes, and video games – portray gender stereotypes.¹⁶ In the early development of a child's life, they are easily affected by the subliminal messages in terms of gender stereotypes. Male characters have traits such as career-orientation, leadership, aggression, assertiveness, and independence, often associated with higher status, whereas, women are portrayed as being emotional, sensitive, attractive, and status-neutral.¹⁷ Gender stereotypes in children's narrative can have a detrimental impact on younger generations; specifically as to how they perceive themselves and how they perceive the other gender as a male or female. These perceptions created in children's books are capable of being subconsciously passed on to children. Therefore, makers of children's picturebooks can play an essential role of in the elimination of gender stereotypes.¹⁸

¹⁴ Franziska Moser and Jackie Masterson, "Are There Signs of Change in Gendered Language Use in Children's Early Reading Material," *Gender & Language* 8, no. 1 (2014): 73.

¹⁵ Sarah Murnen et al., "Boys Act and Girls Appear: A Content Analysis of Gender Stereotypes Associated with Characters in Children's Popular Culture," *Sex Roles* 74, no. 1-2 (2016): 79.

¹⁶ Ibid., 78.

¹⁷ Ibid., 79.

¹⁸ Angela M. Gooden and Mark A. Gooden, "Gender Representation in Notable Children's Picture Books: 1995-1999," *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* 45, no. 1 (01/01/ 2001): 89.



Figure 3: A poster of the movie *Mulan*

The 1998 film *Mulan*, a feature animated film produced by Disney, was based on an old Chinese tale named *Hua Mulan*. This tale featured a Chinese female protagonist who pretended to be a male in order to join the army so as to take the place of her old father and repel the enemy. Among all the notable animations and picture books, this is one that exists which has a positive Chinese female role model as a protagonist. Breaking from the stereotypes of how females are portrayed, the characteristics *Mulan* uses, suggests women can be just as brave and capable as men.

The space between

In her book, Child has combined scenes and characters from several well-known fairy tales, such as *Goldilocks* and *the Three Bears*, *Candy House*, *Rapunzel*, *Le Maître Chat* and *Cinderella*, to create a new story. Even the title of her book is a play on a line from a song from the Disney classic cartoon based on the fairy tale of the *Three Little Pigs*. *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?* is about a boy named Herb who represents your average child reader – kids who draw on the pages of their books, tearing or folding pages, letting food drop into their books, adding stickers, and other random acts of disruption and minor vandalism. In the book, the reader sees Herb falling asleep while reading his book of fairy tales, and in his dreams entering a world of all his stories and finding himself trapped inside the book. Once inside the narrative, Herb enters the space with the tale's characters, who are not happy with the way Herb has treated them and so try to capture him. Herb tries to escape, and stumbles through the narrative spaces of various fairy tales, until he finally awakes.

By contrast, *Where the Wild Things Are* is a book that uses a different visual tool to make people *fall* into the story. In the beginning of this picture book, the image is small, however, as the story develops images increase in size and scale taking the readers to the main character Max's dream world. After the narrative comes to a climax the size of the images return to their smaller form.

In both Child and Sendak's books, the authors use dream spaces to trigger the character moving into different realities. The main protagonists, Herb and Max, fall into imaginative worlds where abnormal things happen. After waking up, everything becomes normal again. In Shaun Tan's work, however, he invites his audiences to experience the real world

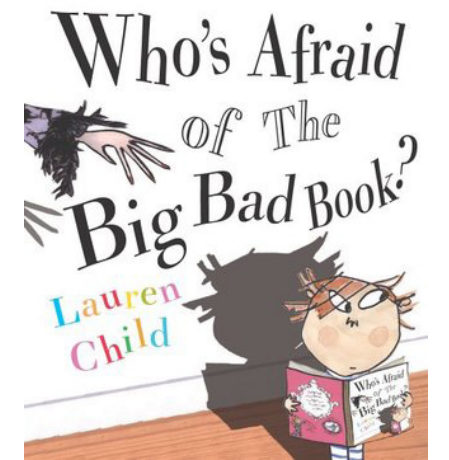


Figure 4: The cover of *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?*

with his imaginative visual literacy. A real world that we live in is being presented in a way that is filled with things strange and mysterious. For instance, in *The Arrival*, Tan challenges the way people think about the world we experience every day. Tan details his feelings and experiences in the visual narrative, revealing that people are also capable of turning into monsters in the real world. Tan reminds readers that if you look carefully, you will notice that the world we are living in is a queer place, not just in a dream space. In my book, I am falling into a memory, falling into a world that I remember.

The memory of my experience in my youth formed this unique emotional attachment with *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Among all the stories that I read when I was little, this one gave me affective strength. Al-Jafar and Buzzelli write, "Stories provide a rich language full of expressive and creative possibilities giving children an outlet for their experiences in their own world without any adult intervention or interpretation of that experience."¹⁹ I personally imagined myself as the child who tells the truth without getting into trouble. Storytelling allows people to imagine themselves in the story, shifting between time dimensions and realities, and constructing new memories. *The Emperor's New Clothes* was written in the past, but for any modern day reader, it can become alive in the moment. This project aims to show how a new meaning can emerge from the collapse in time and space between my experience and Andersen's version of *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

Like Child and Sendak, I am interested in the mixing of realities that retelling an old story can bring to the reader's experience of the fairy story. Telling a story that has a historical legacy is not about replacing its narrative with another but about adding new layers of meaning. Similarly to Tan, I am folding myself into the narrative in terms of incorporating myself into the storyline. In my book, I am falling backwards into my memories; there in that place of my childhood, I begin

to mix my experience with the memory of the story, merging reality, memory and narrative. The terrain of my project, is somewhere between dreamscape and memoryscape, similar to Shaun Tan's world (without the monsters).

¹⁹ Ali Al-Jafar and Cary A. Buzzelli, "The Art of Storytelling for Cross Cultural Understanding," *International Journal of Early Childhood* 36, no. 1 (2004): 36, accessed May 10, 2018, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03165939>.

Methodology statement and project specific methods

Research question:

How can illustration and typography be instrumental in establishing an interwoven narrative space in order to combine personal memory with traditional storytelling through the re-creation of a historical fairy tale?

Methodological Statement

This research project aims to develop a children's picture book that combines two narratives: my personal memory and *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Combining these two stories has enabled a new narrative to emerge, a story about a young Asian female. Through this research, I hoped to produce a picture book that empowers children to speak *their* truth and to use *their* voice. To achieve this, I employed a mixed methods approach that merges storytelling within an illustrative methodology.

Initially, I hadn't planned to incorporate my own experience into the narrative, however, after constantly being asked about the rationale for selecting this narrative I had to consider deeply the factors triggering my emotional bond to this story. When I realised the essence of my decision-making sprang from a personal memory from my childhood I began to investigate how storybooks could impact on a child's unconscious. Through my personal memory I have noticed that the voice of the child is often overlooked and that storybooks can be a useful emotional outlet or provide psychological *comfort*. Narratives can construct spaces between reality and the virtual world, allowing readers to fashion new memories. As a graphic designer and illustrator I identified the importance of developing an overlapping narrative, and how illustration as a

methodological framework enabled me to design the imagery, using colour and form, as well as proportion and layout. Bespoke typography based on calligraphic writing is also handmade. Combining illustration and narrative design has enabled me to address social, cultural, and educational issues.

As a young Chinese woman, I felt it was important to create an Asian female character based on an archetype drawn from a childhood picture of myself. I have used illustration to create different spaces inside the narrative; for two groups of people and two diverse cultures. Hand drawing requires an iterative approach to developing visuals, sketching characters, clothes, scenes, and then colourising them. In addition, I have considered the various voices in the story and developed typography to enhance and underscore the personality of the characters.

Methods

In this project I have incorporated a range of methods that are bespoke, using the handmade as the aesthetic and practical creation of my design ideas.

1. Analysis of book structures, narrative and language styles.
2. Iterative text-editing to develop the story.
3. The main visual method used in creating this book is hand-drawing.
4. Using my knowledge of calligraphy, I have created typefaces suited to the characters.
5. Hand-binding exposes the threads that hold the narrative together, reinforcing the notion of the handmade that is woven throughout the design of this research project.

Concept Development and Discussion

Barbara Bader (author and art historian) writes:

*A picture book is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost an experience for a child. As an art form, it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page.*²⁰

Picture books can be conduits through which children and associated readers are introduced to social, cultural, and historical narratives. This method of storytelling intrigues and stimulates the reader in different ways. Unlike older picture books, illustrated children's stories are likely to contain features nowadays that combine and expand on classic themes familiar in childhood. Playfulness, rule-breaking, fragmentation and uncertainty are commonplace. In the picturebook, text and pictures entwine with each other in conveying meaning, neither of which alone would make the narrative complete. Illustrators are encouraged to think through drawing, and to add their own voice to the story, placing themselves inside the folds of the pages. Factors, including personality and cultural background affect the development of one's own artistic voice, nevertheless, this visual 'signature' should not be a barrier to communicating with the reading audience. I have focused on choosing an appropriate method for producing the narrative while remaining present in the narrative structure. Through this research project I have endeavoured to place myself literally and figuratively within Hans Christian Andersen's version of the famous fairy story *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

²⁰ Salisbury and Styles, *Children's Picturebooks*, 75.

1.01 Toing and Froing: movements between my personal memories & Andersen's fairytale

Andersen's version is not the original version of this story. There is at least one other interpretation, written in Spanish 500 years earlier. It is believed that Andersen's version stems from his reading of a German translation "So ist der Lauf der Welt" of this story. Before Andersen's edition was printed he wrote a new ending for the story, altering it from the populace admiring the emperor's clothes, to one that had a child pointing out that the Emperor was naked.²¹ Through history and memory, I am bound to Andersen's narrative. One of the reasons I was attracted to his version of the story about the emperor was a lingering memory from my childhood.

Lauren Child's, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?* inspired me to think about how as an author and designer I could create a character of myself inside the narrative. This would allow me to combine the roles of narrator and be part of the visual structure, a character in the tale. When I was young my book of Andersen's stories contained only written text. Now, as a designer and illustrator, I wanted to gather up all the words and make a picture book for this project. Designing this story has opened up a discourse between my contemporary and eight-year-old self.

Toing and froing in this instance refers to me shifting between narrative spaces: my memory and Andersen's story. Based on me, the main character, Manting, moves between these spaces. On the cover of my book, you see the Emperor himself reading a book, the cover of which features Manting reading the same book (Figure 6). The first section of the story reveals a short narrative about an event in Manting's life. Then Manting swings out of the story letting the Emperor swing in to take up the narrative. During the reading of the emperor's story, Manting swings back



Figure 5: A picture of me (source Manting Ding, 2018)

²¹ Wullschläger, *Hans*, 170-171.

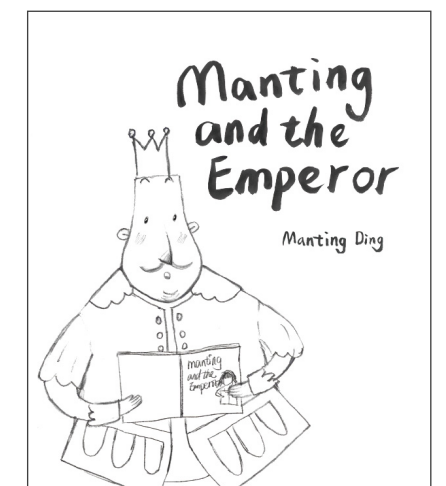


Figure 6: A sketch of the cover of my book (source Manting Ding, 2018)



Figure 7: Draft page 6 for *The Emperor's New Clothes* (source Manting Ding, 2018)

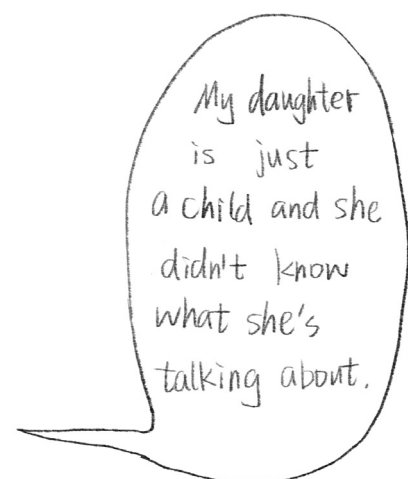


Figure 8: Draft for *Manting and the Emperor* (source Manting Ding, 2018)

in with her thoughts. At the end, Manting reappears as the child who points out the truth – that the Emperor is not wearing any clothes. Like Andersen, I have created my own version of *The Emperor's New Clothes* enfolding the original within a new narrative.

In my book when Manting starts to read, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, I have drawn my alter ego to reinforce the idea that Manting is moving between the reality of her world and the virtual space created by the original book. This transition suggests the importance of the story within my childhood memory and signifies a shift from my memory, to the opening of the fairy tale's traditional narrative (Figure 3). Moreover, it pulls the reader into Manting's narrative so that the reader can share reading Andersen's story through the child's eyes, as well as inviting every reader to swing into her perspective of the story. As a child I was



Figure 9: Draft for *Manting and the Emperor* (source Manting Ding, 2018)

told to be silent when I spoke what I thought was the truth, whereas the child in Andersen's story tells the truth and everyone agrees with her/him. As a consequence, I replaced the child in Andersen's story with myself, building intimacy between my personal experience and the child in his story. Unconsciously, making the change enabled me to retain integrity when speaking my own thoughts. I have realised that Andersen's fairy tale was embedded in my unconsciousness whilst being a child, and has had a powerful influence on me.

Salisbury and Styles put it: "The pictures would carry the main essence of what was to be conveyed. The text would gently augment them, spoken entirely as dialogue by the child narrating his thoughts and memories."²² The memory of the story in my parents' shop was strong but blurry. I spent some time remembering the details of my childhood and the shop. I was not able to visit the small shop (in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China) to help me recall those memories as the shop no longer exists. This project gave me the opportunity to recreate a sense of place, using old family photographs of the shop and myself. (Figure 11)

1.02 Speech bubbles: letting the characters talk

Salisbury and Styles write,

*The wordless variety requires young readers to create the text for themselves, providing what Anne Rowe calls 'voices off': 'the event may seem to tell themselves but they are given voice by a reader/narrator.'*²³

In *The Arrival*, Shaun Tan only uses illustrations to narrate his story, as Tan believes this form of narration better expresses the feelings for his book.²⁴ Tan invites

²² Salisbury and Styles, *Children's Picturebooks*, 61.

²³ Ibid., 97.

his audience to create a unique narration for this wordless book, giving the reader a voice. The character in Tan's book was not asked to keep silent, but the unknown environment made him keep silent. In my memory I was not asked to keep silent by my father, however, what my father said made me want to keep silent, in case I said the wrong thing. *The Emperor's New Clothes* has become a symbol of my desire to express my own thoughts and gain approval for doing so.

As the author, using speech bubbles has given me the power to bestow each character with their own voice regardless of the truth of their statement. In Andersen's story, people are too afraid of others' opinions to say what they truly believe. In the space of my narrative, I wanted to create a place where everybody can express themselves.

In comic books, illustrators use text-filled speech bubbles to narrate the action. I took this feature of caricature, applying it in my storytelling and emphasising the vital role of having a voice. When I want characters to express their thoughts, I've drawn their 'voices,' using hand-drawn typography to illustrate the emotional presence of each character.

I designed a sheet of blank speech bubbles that offers and enables readers to bring their voices into the narrative, and therefore to intervene or take part in the reading with the character Manting. Participants can write their thoughts into the bubbles and place them wherever they want, thereby enhancing interaction between the story and readers, adding their own voice to the narrative. Having blank speech bubbles allows the voice to be lifted out of the page. The audience might take the sticker to put into another place. Different voices can come into the narrative and go out of the book.



Figure 10: Draft for *Manting and the Emperor* (source Manting Ding, 2018)

²⁴ "The Arrival," Shaun Tan, Shaun Tan, accessed May 10, 2018, <http://www.shauntan.net/books.html>.

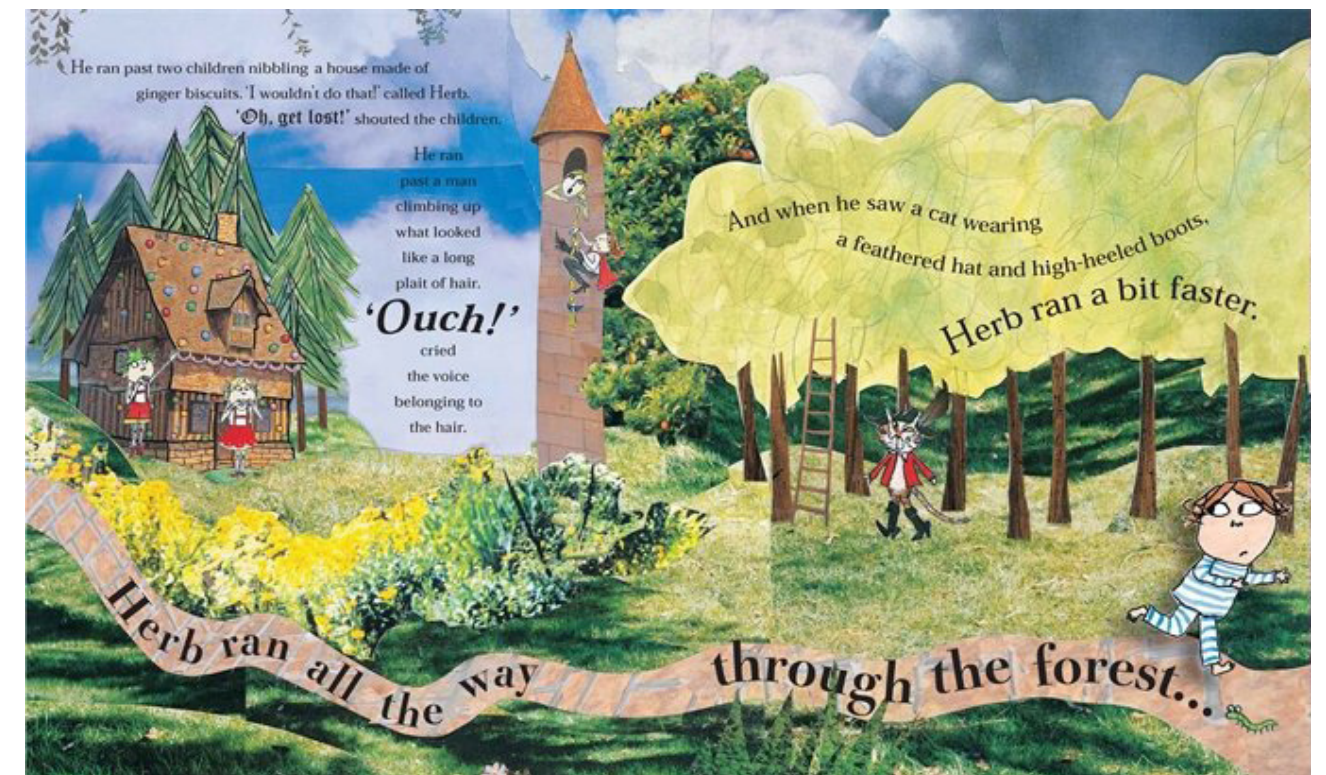
1.03 The role of typography in expanding the narrative

"Word and image work together creatively to form a composite text, each enriching, expanding and enhancing the other," according to Salisbury and Styles.²⁵ Text and images weave themselves seamlessly into the storytelling, with neither of them being fully understood independently. Organising all the text in an efficient way within the limited pages is helpful in constructing a book. It is easier to find an appropriate format after attempting diverse miniature layouts for the structure of the book: the number of pages, the size of the illustration, and the balance of images and text.

²⁵ Salisbury and Styles, *Children's Picturebooks*, 93.

Pictorial text is well presented in *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?* with an interplay of words and images. The text in this book can also be a part of the image as well. Lauren Child uses different typefaces, size and shape in depicting the text which gives vivid tones and flows with the narrative, making the reading an amusing experience. The scattered text occupies

Figure 11: Two pages from Lauren Child's *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?*



the pages without following traditional rules of layout. Initially, I thought I would contemporise Andersen's story (Appendix) using the original narrative, however, after several attempts at organising the layout of the book, I realised there was way too much reliance on words. In addition, I wanted to emphasise the essence of Andersen's fairy tale rather than be true to the whole text, focusing on the parts of the story that impacted me most, which is the child telling the truth. I edited Andersen's story and combined it with my own narrative to create a book that contained fewer words and left more space for the reader to interpret the narrative.

Reinforcing the intimacy I felt as a child reading this tale, I chose to use handwriting, opening up an interpretive space for me in Andersen's story. I used Chinese calligraphy as the basis for some of my typographic explorations, which connected the story to my background as a Chinese woman. I included Chinese words in this English version of the story in order to create a bridge between the Chinese and European worlds represented in my narrative.

Figure 14 shows traditional *Yan* style Chinese calligraphy (calligraphic style of *Yan Zhenqing*, a calligrapher in the Tang Dynasty). The collision of Chinese and English calligraphy in my picture book creates a visual harmony in aesthetic style between these two cultures. To the readers who cannot understand Chinese, the text characters can be viewed as image rather than writing. Being unable to read all the text does not affect the comprehension of the story. Calligraphy encompasses both typography and image. Moreover, unlike English words, Chinese was originally transformed from pictograms, developed over centuries into the contemporary forms we now recognise as Chinese figures today (Figure 15).

Black Chinese ink in calligraphy leaves a rustic aesthetic to the image. I intend to use colour in reflecting the inner world of the characters' mind in

my book. In the beginning, the illustration is colourful (Figure 13), until Manting falls silent. The backdrop of Manting starts getting darker, which resembles her world becoming monotonous. When the characters cannot speak their real thoughts, the illustration stays in black and white. More colours are revealed once Manting tells the truth at the end of the story. The movement of colours can be used as a metaphor to express the feelings of silence.

Figure 12: Draft page 11 for *Manting and the Emperor* (source Manting Ding, 2018)

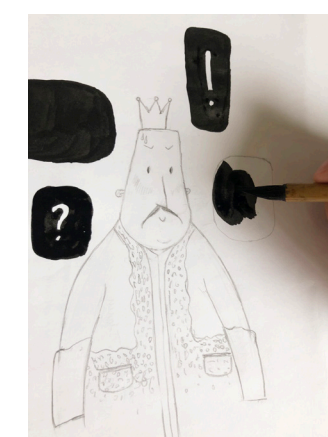
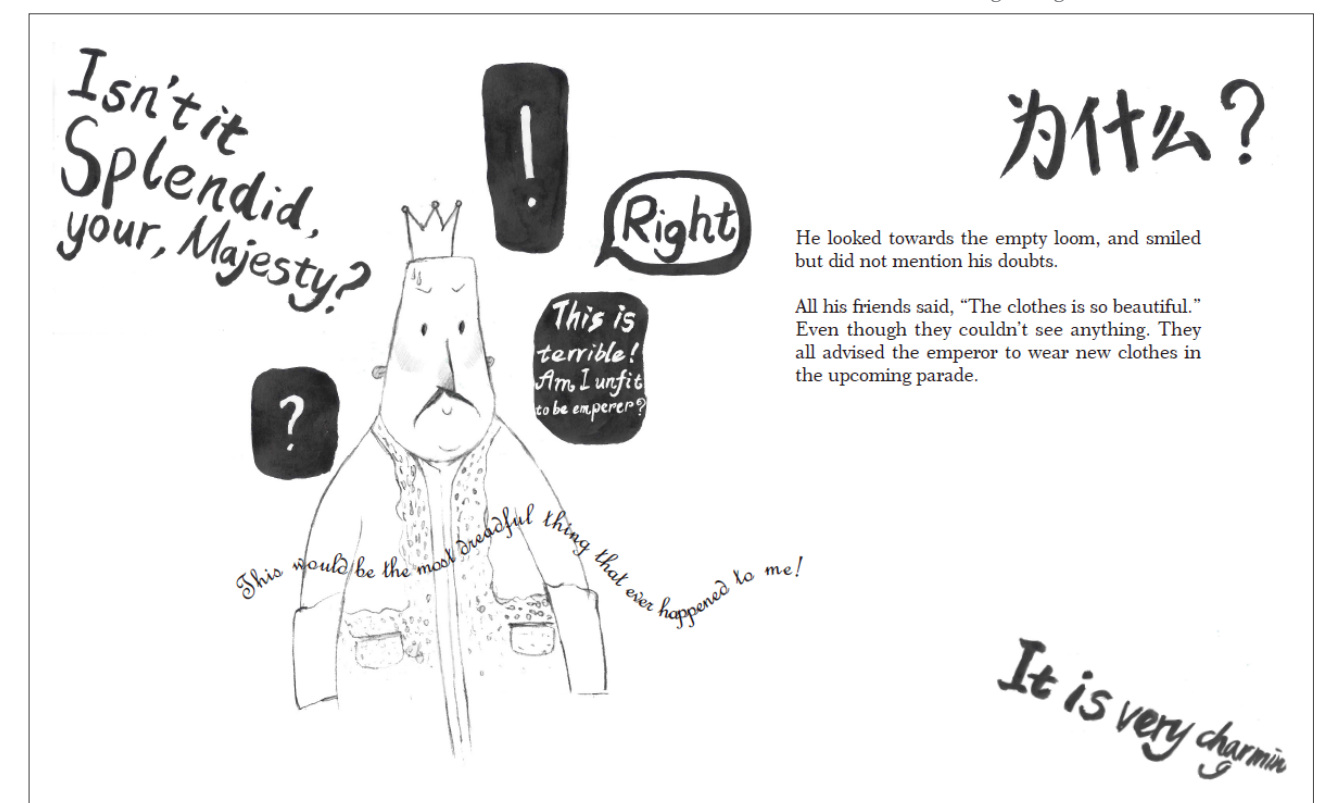


Figure 13: Draft for *Manting and the Emperor* (source Manting Ding, 2018)



Figure 14: A traditional *Yan* style Chinese calligraphy



Figure 15: Transformation of three Chinese words (horse, fish, and vehicle)

1.04 The role of illustration

Salisbury and Styles discuss:

As we draw from observation, the marks we make do not only describe the form or contours of the subject, but they also begin to express those aspects of it that we are, consciously or unconsciously, most interested in or curious about as individuals. This is how the individual, personal language of picture-making begins to evolve.²⁶

During the making process, I tended to see the world through the eyes of a child, working with a direct and simple way using hand-drawn image and text, to convey a personal visual language.

Salisbury and Styles also say,

In How Picturebooks Work, Nikolajeva and Scott use the term 'complementary' for picturebooks where the images reflect and expand what is in the written text or where each fills the other's gaps.²⁷

Pictures have the power to tell more of the story than words. Illustration should present more details than the text describes – for example, *mood* created through tonal variance. In my design I have tried to use words and pictures to make the story complete; one is not more important than the other.

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book? is written and illustrated by Lauren Child. Her use of a collage style for the illustrations in her book is consistent with

²⁶ Salisbury and Styles, *Children's Picturebooks*, 56.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.



Figure 16: A picture of my parents' shop (source Manting Ding, 2018)

the narrative of Herb cutting out paper and drawing on it. In my book I want the narrative and image to tell a story that folds into different perspectives and times.

I positioned Andersen's story in a European background, rather than in China. Because as a child reading the book, I was aware that the story was set in a different land and depicted a different society. When the younger me, the child, could not find affirmation in my reality, I tended to search for it elsewhere (in Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes*). To me, as a young Chinese girl, a European world was a totally different place from my own where the freedom to imagine was allowed to take place. The mind of a little girl was wandering in Andersen's story whilst Manting was in the reality of her parents' shop.



Figure 17: A drawing of Page 2 for *Manting and the Emperor* (source Manting Ding, 2018)

In the preface of my book, a western emperor wearing a Chinese emperor's traditional garment and a young Chinese girl wearing a relatively western style dress suggests the collision and mixture of two diverse cultures, which is in line with the narrative of mixing a western story and a personal Chinese story. However, in the main body of the story, the selections of the clothes are generally more contemporary and of a western style, suggesting memories can be a chaotic space.

I chose watercolour as the medium to convey the images of the story as the feature of transparency matches with the idea of the invisible clothes that people have admired in this story. Moreover, the paper used for painting in watercolour is made of cotton, the material that is most used for making cloth.



Figure 18: An image of an ancient Chinese emperor's clothes

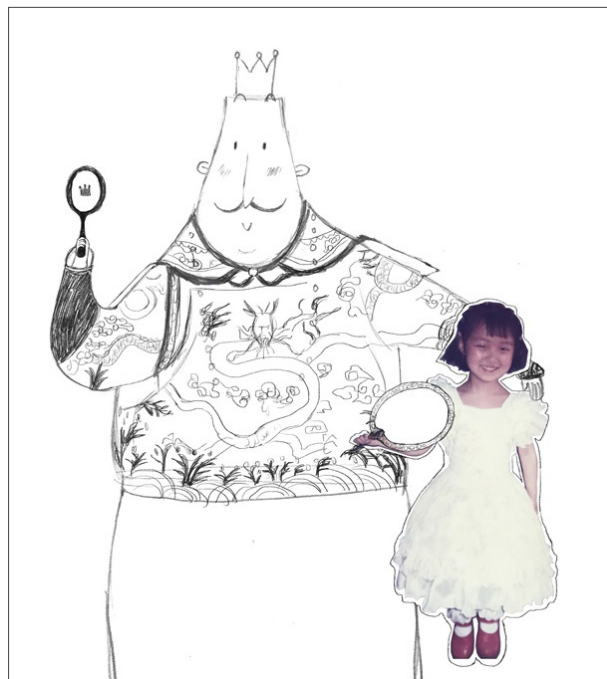


Figure 19: Draft for *Manting and the Emperor* (source Manting Ding, 2018)

1.05 Asian female character development

Gopalakrishnan says that

*Multicultural children's literature can be situated in multiculturalism, the result of the civil rights movement, which touched many fields in an effort to give voice and equal rights to previously underrepresented people.*²⁸

In the late 20th century, other ethnicities such as Black, Asian, and Latino races started being taken into account in children's literature in Western society.²⁹ However, there are still insufficient positive Asian female characters in mainstream children's books. The consciousness of cultural difference between the two societies requires an insider to fuse cultural conflicts in solving social issues. Being an Asian protagonist in the story, Manting is an outsider inside a European story. This picturebook presents the perspective of an Asian character viewing a foreign culture through a well-known children's literature and its impact on her.

Multiculturalism in children's picture books gives greater voice and authority to underrepresented groups.³⁰ This book tackles both racism and sexism. It is vital for authors who make children's books to bring the right voices to the underrepresented or misrepresented groups. Considering this, I made the decision to create an Asian character playing the key role in my picturebook.

According to Salisbury, "Children's book illustration is a subtle and complex art form that can communicate on many levels and leave a deep imprint on a child's consciousness."³¹ The distinction of an Asian female protagonist presented in an English picture book emphasises the equality of gender and ethnic differences that could have an impact on children's



Figure 20: A picture of me (source Manting Ding, 2018)

Figure 21: A picture of me (source Manting Ding, 2018)

²⁸ Ambika Gopalakrishnan, *Multicultural Children's Literature: A Critical Issues Approach*. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2011), 21.

²⁹ Ibid., 7.

³⁰ Ibid., 24.

³¹ Salisbury, *Illustrating*, 6.



Figure 22: Draft of character Manting (source Manting Ding, 2018)



Figure 23: Draft of character Manting (source Manting Ding, 2018)

unconsciousness in valuing it. In shaping the main character, I have tried to differentiate the appearance of the features of Asian to other European characters in my book. After identifying the uniqueness of Asian appearance, I changed ubiquitous round eyes into narrow-shaped eyes (Figures 22 and 23). Ethnic diversity may be introduced to children, however the moral issue I intend to address in this narrative is universal. People can hide their real voice or opinion in worrying about other's judgement.

Under the small voice of my own personal issue with my childhood memory, I wish to give a bigger voice to Asian females through the making of this children's book. Asians are a majority amongst immigrants in the United States.³² As migration happens all around the world, this genre of children's book could empower second generation immigrants. Small voices may seem trivial, but can make a difference subliminally creating points of familiarity.

³² Donna E. Norton, *Multicultural Children's Literature: Through the Eyes of Many Children* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 1.

³³ Salisbury, *Illustrating*, 75.

1.06 You are invited to be part of the story

Maurice Sendak states,

*Children...will tolerate ambiguities, and things illogical; will take them into their unconscious and deal with them as best they can... the artist has to be a little bit bewildering and a little bit disorderly.*³³

Audiences may be surprised if picture books break from the common rules of the conventional story and reveal the potential to put new life into the original work.

Picture books invite children to read, think, and interpret stories by offering a slightly challenging visual code that is presented by colour, material, picture and form, which stimulates children's imaginative, cognitive, and aesthetic capabilities.³⁴ Picture books are designed to be read multiple times allowing ideas or interpretations of the narrative to grow and take shape over time. Picturebooks help children to understand the world that they have not yet experienced,³⁵ which suggests that children's books bring new experiences to children. Children read the book with adults for the first few times, and then read the picture book by themselves some more. Such a reading process helps children to understand the relationships between the pictures and the words, and as a result, to fully experience the book.³⁶

Starting with the outer edge of the narrative – the books cover, I drew the Emperor holding a copy of the book with Manting on the cover, which suggests that the Emperor is reading Manting's story, inside Manting reads the Emperor's story. In my book, readers are invited to read along with Manting (Figure 7), giving readers a sense of a shared unfolding of the story.

³⁴ Salisbury and Styles, *Children's Picturebooks*, 86.

³⁵ Salisbury, *Illustrating*, 6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

Figure 24: A try-out for *Manting and the Emperor* (source Manting Ding, 2018)



I sewed string into the paper of my book to enhance its material sense, weaving the text into the narrative, just as the action of the tricksters in the story who pretended to be sewing clothes. As the central character of the narrative, Manting is instrumental in establishing the multiple layers of reality – through her actions we are drawn to participate in the playful space of the book. I also create interactions between myself and the readers by pulling myself into the narrative in the picture book, adding comments and questions through the mouth of the main character, Manting. This is done so that the author can interact with their readers throughout the book, building a conversation with them. Children can effectively respond not only to the story, but also to the physical object (the book itself) and the author.

Salisbury and Styles state:

Picturebooks are for all ages, and there are plenty of excellent examples to tempt, excite and

*challenge readers of eight years and above. Reading picture books can encourage children to think deeply.*³⁷

In my book, I blend my childhood memory to another well-known fairy tale, constructing a bridge for the reader and my personal narrative. The book becomes a blended space where you enter the book through reading, whilst simultaneously becoming part of the book falling into the space of the fairy tale, merging fiction and reality, space and time, as in the memory. Also, the complexity of the story appeals to older children.

My story has also been designed with the older child as its target audience (aged from 6 to 10) as they are able to read on their own. Cognitive development in this age group is such that they are better able to identify the visual cues and complex layering of the narrative. Shaun Tan notes in his essay (*Picture Books: Who are they for*),

*It often doesn't set out to appeal to a predefined audience but build one for itself. The artists' responsibility lies first and foremost with the work itself, trusting that it will invite the attention of others by the force of its conviction.*³⁸

The target age of between 6 to 10 is the presumed audience, but enjoyment of the book itself is not constrained by age. Anyone who emotionally responds to the story is an ideal audience!

³⁷ Salisbury and Styles, *Children's Picturebooks*, 86.

³⁸ "The Arrival."

Conclusion

This research project has explored storytelling through the making of a picture book that combines contemporary, personal narrative with historical fiction. Storybooks embrace social commentary, and can be used as platforms for addressing personal, cultural and educational issues overtly or covertly through narrative. Creating a character based on an archetype of myself provided a safe place for me to alter my own history. Andersen's version of *The Emperor's New Clothes* opened up a space for me to explore my childhood and to thread my memories through his narrative, so that I became the child calling out... "but he has no clothes on!"

Pictures and words are frequently used to convey different aspects of the narrative in children's books. I chose to integrate them so that the words become pictures, for me and for the authors I reviewed, creating a cohesive visual space which is necessary for revealing layers of meaning. Intertwining visual symbols from Chinese and European cultures provides an aesthetic that brings these two cultures closer together. It has also provided a means of amplifying the voices of children; in particular those of young Asian females. Through telling Manting's story, my own, I hope to show that children have the power to speak the truth.

Whilst my book is only a proof of concept, I think it should be produced for general publication, something I will be investigating once I have completed my Master of Design degree.

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皇帝的新衣

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WILHELM ABRIANO 101

Appendices

The Emperor's New Clothes

(My first edited version based on Andersen's story)

Many, many years ago lived an Emperor who loved new clothes so much that he spent all his money to get them. His only ambition was to be always well dressed. He didn't care about his soldiers, and the theatre did not amuse him. In fact, the only thing he really cared about was to show off new clothes to his people. He would change his clothes every hour of the day, and people would often say "The Emperor is living in his dressing room."

The city he was living in was very cheerful. There were so many strangers that arrived from all parts of the world. One day two tricksters came to this city.

They made people believe that they were tailors, and declared they could make the finest clothes that anyone could ever imagine. They said that the colours and patterns were not only extremely beautiful, but the clothes made of their material would be invisible to anyone who was unfit for their job or particularly stupid.

"Excellent!" thought the Emperor. "Here's a great chance to find out which of my people aren't fit for their positions, and I can figure out the clever from the stupid. I have to have these clothes as soon as possible." He gave a large sum of money to the tricksters so that they could start.

Immediately, they set up two looms, and pretended to work very hard, but they actually did nothing at all on the looms. They demanded the finest silk and most precious golden thread, and they kept it all for themselves while pretending to work with it into the night.

"I want to know what's going on with my new clothes," the Emperor thought, but he remembered that the clothes would be invisible to anyone who can't do their job properly, and became uneasy. Personally, he felt pretty sure he had nothing to worry about. He still thought it would be better to send someone else to see first.

Rumours spread around the town about the magical clothes, and everyone was looking forward to finding out how bad or stupid their neighbours were.

"I shall send my honest old minister to the tailors," thought the Emperor. "As smart as he is, he's the perfect person for this job." The old minister walked into the room where the tricksters were busily pretending to work on their empty looms. "Oh, my goodness!" he thought, while opening his eyes as wide as possible, "I can't see anything at all," but he kept silent.

Both tricksters told him to come closer, asking him if he appreciated the marvelous pattern and colours, while pointing towards the empty looms. The poor minister tried very hard, but he still could see nothing, because there was nothing to be seen. "Oh dear," he thought, "can I be so stupid? I had never thought that, and nobody must know it! Is it possible that I'm not fit for my job? No, no, I can't tell anyone that I wasn't able to see the clothes." "Ok, what do you think of this wonderful work?" said one of the tricksters.

"Oh, it's very pretty, extremely beautiful," replied the old minister looking through his glasses. "What fancy pattern! What brilliant colours! I'll tell the Emperor that I like the clothes very much." "We're pleased to hear that," said the two tailors, and described to him the colours and explained the pattern. The old minister listened very carefully so that he could tell the Emperor what they said.

Later the tricksters asked for even more money, silk and golden thread for making the clothes. They didn't use any of the thread instead they kept everything for their own, and continued working at the empty looms.

Soon afterwards the Emperor sent another honest official to the tailors to see how they were going, and if the clothes was nearly finished. The same thing happened to him as to the minister. He looked and looked but couldn't see anything, since there was nothing to be seen. "Isn't it lovely?" asked the two tricksters, showing and explaining the magnificent pattern that didn't exist. "I'm not a fool," thought the man. "Then, it's because I'm not fit for my position. This is very strange, but I can't let anyone know it." So he praised the clothes and expressed his happiness about the spectacular colours and fantastic patterns.

"It is amazing!" he said to the Emperor.

Everybody in the town talked about the precious clothes. At last, the Emperor decided to see it himself. He went to the room with a group of officials, including the two who had already been there.

These two officials who had been there before asked, "Isn't it splendid your Majesty?" pointing to the empty looms while being sure that everyone else could see the clothes.

"What is happening?" thought the Emperor, "I can't see anything on the looms! This is terrible! Am I stupid? Am I unfit to be emperor? This would be the most dreadful thing that ever happened to me!" "Right," he said in front of everyone, "these clothes have won our highest compliments," and he nodded in a satisfied way towards the empty loom, while not mentioning any of his thoughts.

All his officials said, "It is very charming." Even though they couldn't see anything more than any of the others. They all advised the Emperor to try these stunning clothes on in the upcoming parade. Everybody seemed to be delighted with the great quality of the clothes. The Emperor honored these two tricksters making them "Imperial Court Tailors."

During the night before the grand parade, the tricksters pretended to work, and even burned more than sixteen candles so that people would believe that they were busy to finish the Emperor's new clothes. They pretended to take the clothes off the looms and worked on it in the air with big scissors, and with needles without any thread. Finally, they said, "The Emperor's new clothes are ready now."

The Emperor and all his officials came to the dressing room in the early morning. The tricksters lifted their arms up as if they held something in their hands and said: "These are the trousers!" "This is the coat!" and "Here is the cloak!" and so on. "They are all as light as a feather, and it will feel like as if there's nothing on your body at all, which is the beauty of them."

"Yes, that's right!" said all the officials, although they couldn't see any magical clothes at all.

"Would your Majesty now like to try on the clothes?" said the tricksters, "We could help put your Majesty's new clothes on in front of the royal mirror."

The Emperor got undressed, and the tricksters pretended to put the new clothes on him, one by one. The Emperor looked at himself from every angle in the mirror while he got dressed.

"They look so amazing! They fit so well!" everyone said. "What a remarkable pattern! What extraordinary colours! That is a priceless suit of clothes!" The court announcer called out that the royal tent, which was to be used for the parade,

is now ready. "I am ready," said the Emperor. "My clothes fit me marvelously, don't they?" Then he looked once again into the mirror, so that others would think he truly admired his garments.

The servants, who were meant to carry the Emperor's train of cloth as he walked along, stretched out their hands to the ground as if they were really holding up a train. They pretended to hold something in their hands because they didn't want anyone to know they couldn't see anything!

The Emperor marched in the parade under the beautiful tent, and everyone who saw him from the streets, and out of their windows would shout, "Yes! The Emperor's new Clothes are incomparable! Look at his long train! Look how well it fits him!" Nobody wanted to let anyone else know that they truly saw nothing, because it would mean they were unfit for their jobs, or too stupid! The Emperor's clothes had never been admired as much as they were now.

"But he has no clothes on at all," finally, a little child said. "Wow! Listen to what an innocent child has to say" the child's father said.

Whispers passed from one person to another about what the child said. "But he has no clothes on at all!" finally, the whole town cried out.

This worried the Emperor very much, because he knew that they were right. Even though he knew this, he thought to himself, "I have to carry this out until the end". The servants still followed behind, trying even harder to carry his train which did not exist.

