Translating Landscape Maria Parr's Tonje Glimmerdal from an Ecocritical Perspective

Abstract: The article examines two sets of illustrations of the children's novel Tonje Glimmerdal (2009) by Norwegian author Maria Parr. The original version in Norwegian, illustrated by Åshild Irgens, and the translation into Spanish, illustrated by Zuzanna Celej, are examined. The aim is to show how the concepts of nature and landscape are modified in the translated version. This analysis illuminates how illustrations have an impact on texts, and how illustrations create new meanings. While the original novel is considered a winter pastoral as young protagonist Tonje lives in the mountains and finds her purpose in life in her homeland valley, Irgens' illustrations foreground Tonje's actions, whereas Celej's work is more focused on the landscape. The different ways in which these two versions of the book depict the winter pastoral, and the image of nature, are analysed from an ecocritical perspective, especially following Carol Glotfelty's and Greg Garrard's approaches.

Keywords: pastoral, ecocriticism, nature, landscape, illustration, children's literature, Maria Parr, Tonje Glimmerdal, Åshild Irgens, Zuzanna Celej

Do illustrations in novels matter?

Whereas much literary research has been dedicated to the relationship between text and image in picturebooks, less attention has been paid to the role of illustrations in novels (Aggleton 231). Based on theories on picturebooks, it is necessary to shed some light on how illustrations in novels have an impact on the text, and discuss how they promote new interpretations.

The article examines two sets of illustrations of the children's novel Tonje Glimmerdal (2009) by Norwegian author Maria Parr. The aim is to show how the concepts of nature and landscape are modified

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in the translated version. The analysis illuminates how illustrations have an impact on texts, and how illustrations create new meanings. The material consists of the Norwegian version of *Tonje Glimmerdal* illustrated by Åshild Irgens and the Spanish translation, *Tania Val de Lumbre* (2015), illustrated by Zuzanna Celej. The two different visual takes on the same narrative allow for a study of how the visual narration is altered.

The Norwegian publishing house Samlaget first published *Tonje Glimmerdal* in 2009. The book has been a huge success, as is evident from the many awards and translations ("Tonje Glimmerdal"). Six years after the original was published, the Spanish publishing house Nórdica Libros, which focuses on translating Nordic authors, published the novel as *Tania Val de Lumbre*, translated by Cristina Gómez Baggethun. The novel tells the story of a nine-year-old girl, Tonje Glimmerdal, who lives in the countryside in a Norwegian west-coast fjord landscape. Her best friend is her neighbor Gunnvald, and she loves being outdoors enjoying the nature of her valley, Glimmerdal. She shares some adventures with three brothers who stay at Glimmerdal's campsite, and she also gets to know Heidi, Gunnvald's mysterious daughter.

Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott's categories (225-226), explaining the relationship between words and images, are an effective tool when it comes to detecting the influence of the pictures on the interpretation of the text. They suggest a distinction between picturebooks and illustrated books, defining picturebooks as books where both the visual and the verbal aspects are essential for full communication, and illustrated books as books "where the words carry the primary narrative while pictures are supportive or decorative" (Nikolajeva and Scott 226). Although their categories are designed for picturebooks, they can also be applied to illustrated novels. Nikolajeva and Scott divide the possible relationships between verbal and visual narration into symmetrical interaction, enhancing or complementary interaction, and counterpointing interaction (225-226). In the case of Tonje Glimmerdal and Tania Val de Lumbre, the illustrations are used to enhance or provide additional information lacking in the texts. Whereas Irgens' illustrations reinforce Tonje's actions that are narrated in the text, Celej mainly focuses on the settings of these actions in her illustrations. However, descriptions of the setting are not as prominent in the text as in Celej's pictures.

As the use of illustrations in novels generally is optional, the effects of enhancing interaction between visual and verbal narration in novels are different than in picturebooks. Therefore, the impact of the illustrations might differ from book to book. As Jen Aggleton demonstrates in her study "'What is the Use of a Book Without Pictures?' An Exploration of the Impact of Illustrations on Reading Experience in *A Monster Calls*" (2017), pictures may not influence the general interpretation of novels, but they can make readers engage critically with the text and affect the way they interpret particular scenes and re-examine the text.

In other words, while the inclusion of pictures might not have a crucial impact on the general meaning of a novel, their influence on the text cannot be undermined. It is necessary to keep in mind that the presence of paratexts cannot be ignored in any literary work (Genette). In her article "The Nordic Winter Pastoral: A Heritage of Romanticism" (2018), Aslaug Nyrnes actually declares that when it comes to *Tonje Glimmerdal* "a few, striking illustrations shape the reading experience" (82). Her statement points to the fact that the role of images, at least in this particular novel, is not trivial.

Ecocriticism and contemporary illustrated children's novels

Taking into account that nature is a crucial element in both versions of Maria Parr's novel, there are many reasons to analyse the role of landscape and the environment in the material. Robert Dunbar, Michel Foucault and Stephen Siddall, among others, have argued that since the end of the 20th century, space has become the main concern in literature – as opposed to the previous focus on time (Dunbar et al. qtd. in Carroll 1–2). This shift in literature has coincided with another aspect of contemporary culture linked to space; that is, an urge to react to the present environmental crisis. As a result, this crisis, and the role literature can undertake in it, have attracted attention within children's literature research (see for example Curry; Goga et al.) For this reason, ecocriticism is a suitable and innovative perspective to use when comparing the different illustrated versions of Parr's novel, situated in different cultures.

Three decades ago, ecocriticism was defined as the study of the relationship between literature and the environment that takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (Glotfelty xviii). Here, earth-centrism cannot be understood in absolute terms as it is impossible to detach any human representation from its human conception; all children's and YA texts are actually mediated and crafted representations of nature (Goga et al. 13). However, authors such as Simon c. Estok have taken the concept of ecocriticism further. In "Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness: Ecocriticism and

Ecophobia" from 2009, Estok defends the need "to begin theorizing [ecocriticism's] central matter of concern: ecophobia" (211), which he understands as "an irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world" (208). He argues that ecocriticism that takes ecophobia as its core will find itself moving toward methodology, discussing environmental issues alongside others, analyzing texts by examining environmental history, and performing activism (217). For example, Estok's statement can be contrasted with Greg Garrard's positioning just a few years later. Garrard's definition of ecocriticism is closer to Glotfelty's: "the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself" (Garrard 5), while he also points out that "'nature' is always in some way culturally constructed" (10).

Using Glotfelty's and Garrard's concepts as starting-points, the aim of this article is to analyze how the illustrations in the Norwegian and the Spanish versions respectively convey ecological values, and to what extent this might influence the interpretations of the book. The way in which these novels depict the landscape is representative of how nature is conceptualized, and of the kind of relationship young generations establish with their environment when reading *Tonje Glimmerdal* and *Tania Val de Lumbre*.

Neither the text nor the images in Tonje Glimmerdal make very many references to environmental issues, and nature is seldom problematized in the sense of "tak[ing] account of the escalating environmental challenges and the growing engagement of ecocritical children's literature, which demonstrate a critical and problematizing awareness of nature" (Goga et al. 13). However, Nyrnes states that traces of the post-pastoral and examples of "green awakening" can be found in the text: for example, the temperature of the earth is rising, Tonje's mother is a climate change researcher in the Arctic area, and Glimmerdal is an isolated, sheltered, pre-urban and idealized place where civilization and machines are absent (Nyrnes 85-86). The pastoral - described by Terry Gifford as a retreat in the countryside or wilderness for those living in urban places - can be idealized, nostalgic, unproblematic, Arcadian, or escapist. Since the last decades of the 20th century, the pastoral has co-existed with the post-pastoral, presupposing, for example, a more humble society in a fragile relationship with nature, which recognizes that it is part of nature's creative-destructive processes, and is aware of influences by external natural forces (Gifford).

Despite the post-pastoral components in *Tonje Glimmerdal* pointed out by Nyrnes, this landscape has also been defined as an idyllic portrayal of the dramatic Norwegian mountain landscape and coast by Nina Goga (*Kart i barnelitteraturen* 72). Both scholars associate pastoral and idyll with calm and unproblematic places, where man and nature are in harmony. This, in turn, corresponds to the ethics and the aesthetics of children's literature (Nyrnes 84). It is worth questioning to what extent the illustrations in *Tonje Glimmerdal* contribute to this pastoral topos.

The images in *Tonje Glimmerdal* and *Tania Val de Lumbre* could have been expressions of an endangered nature, echoing the authentic challenges our society must overcome if the planet is to be preserved. Recent studies claim that literature can be used as a platform to make citizens more concerned about the ecosystem (Buell 6), and more willing to preserve the environment (Birkeland 3). Literature can even be used to project "a combination of lifestyle, economic, and policy changes" (Echterling 289). In spite of these possibilities, Irgens and Celej do not take the chance to highlight the references to environmental issues that appear in the text.

When illustrations influence the concept of nature

As Joan Portell argues, illustrators critically interpret texts and make readers understand them through the illustrators' interpretations of the text (124). In Irgens' and Celej's illustrations of Tonje Glimmerdal and Tania Val de Lumbre, the two illustrators express their ideas of nature from different perspectives, and thereby influence the message conveyed. By analyzing the illustrations, it can be concluded that in Tonje Glimmerdal, nature is necessary for Tonje's existence and a prerequisite for her adventures. The content of these illustrations is similar to the content of classic Norwegian adventure novels. As Kristin Ørjasæter explains, after World War II, there was a desire to give Norwegian children books in which they would be able to recognize their own culture; heroic adventure stories set in the wilderness of the North, with ordinary young protagonists that assumed a courageous character, and had the ability to cope on their own in nature. This tendency is still present in contemporary Norwegian children's literature, and wildlife has become a nostalgic literary model for harmony. Moreover, Tonje Glimmerdal is considered a prototype of nostalgic nature depictions (Ørjasæter 44-48).

In *Tania Val de Lumbre*, the illustrations portray nature as beautiful, perfect and calm; an ecosystem without conflicts. Rather than resembling children's adventure novels, the illustrations call to mind nature documentaries or travel guides depicting an idealized Nordic landscape. The landscape is idealized because it is the element that allows Tonje to experience adventures that could not take place in a setting familiar to the Spanish readers. It is rather unlikely that Spanish children would have the opportunity to live in a valley by a fjord, and that they experience nature the way Norwegians do. This is not only due to geographical differences but also to cultural ones. For Nordic children, nature is a key setting for activities, which can include everything from outdoor free play to planned academic activities (Fjørtoft 112; Bentsen et al. 29–30). In the Spanish translation, the landscape is stressed because readers will likely find it exotic. This type of illustrations also engages readers because it allows them to experience unfamiliar terrain, whereas the illustrations in the original engage readers through the use of action and humor.

By using the concept of the pastoral, Nyrnes argues that the original *Tonje Glimmerdal* can be considered a winter pastoral or idyll (82), following the pastoral tradition born in classic time, which has become a permanent part of the Western tradition (Curtius 190). Nyrnes adds that the pastoral typically features water, birds, animals and people in an isolated place, whereas in Glimmerdal, these are indoors or covered with snow (83). But this valley is still described as idyllic because it is a balanced space where people live in harmony with nature.

Nyrnes' interpretation is mainly based on the descriptions in the text, as the illustrations in the Norwegian version depict characters in action, with little contextualisation. This is evident from images where Tonje crashes her sledge next to Klaus Hagen's campsite and he shouts at her (Parr, Tonje 41); where Tonje takes her kick sledge to catch some children who have stolen from her (56); where Tonje takes her sledge down to the port to catch the ferry (84); where Tonje has an argument with Heidi (149); or where Tonje and her friends and aunties practice ski jumping (249). They depict children, in particular the main character, interacting with other people, and with nature. The illustrations show Tonje's qualities, so the word-picture relationship is intended to enhance the behavior of the main character. According to Harald Bache-Wiig, Tonje is in some respects a classic child heroine - she has a zest for life, she cares for others, and she loves nature - but she is also a child heroine of her time, in that she reaffirms her dominion over the valley as her own child paradise (6). Moreover, Tonje has also been described as having a temperament influenced by the landscape where she lives, at the same time as she influences the landscape with her body and her language: for example, when she goes skiing and leaves prints in the snow (Goga, "Landskap og

bannskap"). Goga also describes Tonje's body as topographically constructed, with her features shaped by the landscape ("Landskap og bannskap"). Therefore, according to Gifford's description of the post-pastoral – an expression that refers to how people and nature influence each other and, for example, how human beings are part of nature's creative-destructive processes – the original version of *Tonje Glimmerdal* contains post-pastoral elements.

Goga also argues that Tonje represents an idyllic Western Norway populated by healthy and romantic children ("Landskap og bannskap" 7). This can be linked to the fact that *Tonje Glimmerdal* is an example of how, in Norwegian children's literature, there is a tradition of depicting competent children who master living alone in nature, and preferably in the mountains (Ommundsen 113). Therefore, by highlighting Tonje's actions, the illustrations reinforce the Norwegian idea – already present in the text – that children from an idyllic space need to be competent. Consequently, it is no accident that the cover features Tonje in the middle of a powerful sky jump.

The notion of the competent child belongs to a typically Nordic ideal linked to individual freedom and liberal education: children are expected to be reasonable, responsible and reflexive, in charge of their own learning, critical consumers, and able to take part in discussions and democratic processes (Brembeck et al. 12, 21, 22). In Norwegian post-World War II literature, the ideal of the competent child was expressed as the ability to endure hardships and remain humble, practice Christianity, be frugal, and act independently. Young readers learned that growing up meant gaining the ability to cope with wilderness (Ørjasæter 40-41). Although this concept was replaced by others during the 20th century, it is still present in contemporary books such as Parr's *Tonje Glimmerdal*.

However, when comparing the illustrations from both versions, it is clear that pastoral components of the landscape, rather than the people that live in it, are more present in the Spanish illustrations than in the Norwegian, as the illustrations in the Spanish version depict places, rather than actions or events. Celej's illustrations foreground the setting, and the atmosphere, rather than people or the notion of the competent child. The illustrations work with distance: they include more landscape images than the Norwegian version, and the characters are portrayed as small figures in big settings. For instance, Tonje following Heidi by the river is visualised from a distant point of view that widely frames the landscape (Parr, *Tania* 147). Celej depicts nature as another character, even taking Tonje's place as the central character. Nyrnes argues that "it almost seems as if nature is an anthropomorphic character in the text, and the formation of the landscape depicts the formation of Astrid [Tonje] as nature becomes her best friend" (Nyrnes 83). To conclude, nature takes a more prominent role both in the text and the illustrations in the Spanish version compared to the original edition.

As the main element in Celej's artwork is nature and the main element in Irgens's original illustrations is the characters, the pastoral component from the Spanish edition reinforces the escapist atmosphere of the book, portraying Glimmerdal as a foreign and utopian Nordic place. For this reason, the Spanish version conveys a different message than the Norwegian version, as the illustrations in the translation highlight the winter landscape and downplay the message about competent children.

This becomes evident when comparing paratexts such as the cover, the endpapers and the illustrations. For example, the Norwegian front cover and back cover present two different scenes set in the same rural landscape (see image 1). As Nyrnes describes it: "[Tonje] flies across the landscape. She is energetic, unpretentious, full of humor and enjoys skiing. [...] The front cover and the text all put Astrid [Tonje] in a Norwegian mountain valley by a fjord. [...] The title page shows a house situated between snow-capped mountains and a forest; the environment is wild, with connotations of adventure" (Nyrnes 82).

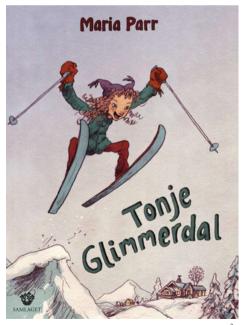


Image I.The cover of Maria Parr's *Tonje Glimmerdal* illustrated by Åshild Irgens. (Reproduced with permission from Samlaget)

In contrast, the landscape plays a more prominent role on the cover of the Spanish translation where Tania/Tonje is smaller and only appears on the front cover. Most of the illustrations reference the landscape, which also is featured on the front cover, back cover and book flaps. Thanks to the use of watercolor and the lack of clearly defines lines, the illustrations evoke a sense of sentimentality and nostalgia. The sea, the mountains, and the sky are covered in snow and Tania is sitting on an old-fashioned wooden sledge, dressed in old-fashioned clothes. In contrast to the cartoonish, energetic shapes and black lines of the Norwegian cover, this cover is fairytale-like and poetic. By looking at the cover, which is "the first manifestation of the book offered to the reader's perception" (Genette 27), the reader is introduced to the specific tone and atmosphere of the book, which in the case of *Tania Val de Lumbre* is more closely linked to the Nordic setting than to the main character as such (see image 2).

This is also suggested by the maps included in the endpapers. Celej's map echoes Irgens' map: a map of the valley where the main character lives, a rural place in between the city and the wilderness (Parr, *Tania* 82). However, the Spanish map is in color and reminiscent of postcards. In addition, snow plays a more central role here than in Irgens' map, and the geographical elements are less noticeable and more difficult to position. In the Norwegian map, on the other hand, there are no decorative elements such as trees scattered eve-



Image 2. The cover of the Spanish edition of Maria Parr's *Tonje Glimmerdal* illustrated by Zuzanna Celej. (Reproduced with permission from Nórdica Libros)

rywhere, and the map resembles an authentic map more than the map in the Spanish translation. Since the map is more detailed and lacks superfluous elements, the reader can easily find the different locations where the events of the story take place. Like many other children's literary maps, the one in *Tonje Glimmerdal* has much in common with medieval maps, also called image maps, organized through references to distinctive landmarks and a mixture of top or side views (Goga, *Kart i barnelitteraturen* 71). The city is located outside the map, but indicated by arrows, as the idea of idyll is closely linked to the contrast between the city and the country side (Goga, *Kart i barnelitteraturen* 72). The maps of both editions fit with this description and, therefore, help to create an idyllic and pastoral view of the valley.

It is also interesting to compare specific illustrations of the same scenes from the different editions. For example, both editions include an illustration of the same scene in chapter 10 (Parr, *Tonje* 97; Parr, *Tania* 84). The Norwegian illustrations – showing the main character arriving by sledge to the port – are more faithful to the text than the Spanish illustrations, which depict a quiet landscape, without human action. Using Nikolajeva and Scott's terminology (225–226), the latter serve as counterpoints to the text.

Both editions also include an illustration of a scene in chapter 17, depicting the same characters – Tonje/Tania and Heidi – and the same event – the girl meeting the woman in front of Gunnvald's house and complaining about her decisions (Parr, *Tonje* 149; Parr, *Tania* 129). Again, the Spanish version emphasizes the setting, whereas the Norwegian image only depicts the two characters talking and the two steps where Heidi is sitting (see image 3 and 4).

The Norwegian version focuses on the event; that is, the conversation between the two characters. Moreover, Celej's illustration enhances the text as Gunnvald's house – a *laftehus*, a traditional Norwegian log house – does not fit the supposed location and time period. Including this kind of building in this scene, and also in chapter 23 (Parr, *Tania* 174), promotes the idyllic and utopian Nordic feel of the book.

Not only do the two sets of illustrations differ when it comes to what they depict, they also differ in style. Except for the cover, the Norwegian illustrations are all in black and white and composed of lines only, in a humorous style similar to caricatures or cartoons. The Spanish illustrations, on the other hand, are all in color and do not include any clearly defined lines. Irgen's illustrations enhance the comical side of the text, whereas Celej's illustrations enhance the moving, sentimental aspects of the text.



Image 3. Heidi and Tonje in front of Gunnvald's house (Parr, *Tonje Glimmerdal* 149). (Reproduced with permission from Samlaget)



Image 4. Gunnvald's traditional Norwegian log house in the Spanish edition (Parr, *Tania Val de Lumbre* 129). (Reproduced with permission from Nórdica Libros)

Regarding the two illustrator's different preferences when it comes to focusing on events or on the landscape, the prior knowledge of Norwegian and Spanish readers respectively is relevant. As the Norwegian reader recognizes the pastoral landscape when reading the text, there is no need to make it explicit in the illustrations. Therefore, the images do not need to include information the reader already knows belongs to that topos. Spanish readers, however, may not have much prior knowledge of this cultural and geographical setting, and therefore they need to see it in the paratexts. For example, when Norwegian readers see some of these close-up images, they read them as a metonymy of a larger place. In other words, the illustrations in the Norwegian version can be seen as signs of what they represent. The illustrators are aware of the prior knowledge of Norwegian and Spanish readers. The perception or appreciation of an image depends on the reader's way of seeing, on what he or she knows or believes (Berger 8-10). Similarly, according to Roland Barthes, every image is polysemous and implies "a 'floating chain' of signifiers" (39), which gives the reader the possibility to choose some of them while ignoring others. Constructivist theories might also help clarify how images from the translation can complete the information from the text, as constructivist theories support the idea that reading comprehension is influenced by aspects such as the socio-moral knowledge of the reader, and the degree to which the cultural assumptions of the text match those of the reader (Narvaez 158).

Although many illustrated scenes from the original also are illustrated in *Tania Val de Lumbre*, some pictures from *Tonje Glimmerdal* do not appear in the translation. For instance, chapter 3 includes an image of a digger and its owner Peter, wearing working clothes and stopping the traffic from the road (Parr, *Tonje* 31), and chapter 18 includes a picture of Tonje and her friend Ole in a café in town (Parr, *Tonje* 161) (see image 5).

These scenes have an urban feel incompatible with the idyllic atmosphere of the Spanish edition. In the same line, some additional illustrations are included in the Spanish version in order to add to the specifically Nordic atmosphere. This is the case of an image in chapter 5 that shows Tania's dream about swimming with seals in Greenland (Parr, *Tania* 45). It is a fantasy image in the same vein as the other illustrations in the book, also similar to previous illustrations by Celej in other books, such as *Histoires d'îles sous le soleil et sous le vent* by Marilyn Plénard (2013) and *El barco de los niños* by Mario Vargas Llosa (2014).



Image 5. Tonje and Ole at a café in town (Parr, *Tonje Glimmerdal* 161). (Reproduced with permission from Samlaget)

In addition, chapter 7 includes another traditional Norwegian element: a troll (Parr, *Tania* 59). More specifically, this picture represents the Norwegian fairy tale "Three Billy Goats Gruff" that is explained in the novel. It may have been included because trolls are part of the idyllic, even fantastic, Norwegian landscape that is presented in the Spanish illustrations (see image 6).

Consequently, the illustrations in the Spanish translation underline the winter pastoral aspect of the story because the setting is seen as somewhere far away, imaginary, utopian and even exotic, as there is a distance between the setting and the readers both culturally and geographically.

For example, using skis, steering sledges and kick sledges as a means of transport – not as a sport or hobby – is not common in Southern Europe. However, in the original illustrations, the place and the characters' actions are closer to the reality of the Norwegian reader as these activities belong to the reader's cultural and geographical context. In the Spanish version, the Nordic landscape functions as pastoral escapism, a remote place where the reader wishes to go. Utopia in these illustrations is considered *compensatory*, using Ruth Levitas' term. Glimmerdal is portrayed as an idyllic place frozen in time; a utopia that takes the form of a myth of a golden age (Levitas 222).



Image 6. Zuzanna Cellej's illustration of the troll from the fairy tale "Three Billy Goats Gruff" (Parr, *Tania Val de Lumbre* 59). (Reproduced with permission from Nórdica Libros)

Conclusion

The article has examined two sets of illustrations of *Tonje Glimmer-dal*, from the original Norwegian publication of the book, and from the Spanish translation. The original illustrations are in line with the text's lack of environmentalism as the pictures mainly focus on characters and events and when nature is present, it is only as background information, without highlighting its intrinsic values. In the Spanish translation the landscape is more present, idealised and utopian. In this respect, the Spanish illustrations clearly differ from the Norwegian, which are more realistic.

Previous studies show that *Tonje Glimmerdal* – both images and text – only present some hints pointing towards sustainability. My comparison of two versions of the novel shows that the Spanish edition reflects a similar approach, although it is clear that the style and contents of Celej's illustrations in *Tanja Val de Lumbre* stands in contrast to Irgens's illustrations of *Tonje Glimmerdal*. Therefore, although

the cultural context and plot of the novel could invite an ecological stance in both versions, the notion of nature these illustrators enhance suggests a less sustainable approach.

Moreover, the cultural information embedded in both sets of illustrations results in different messages. The illustrators are aware of the prior knowledge readers possess and take a stand when interpreting the text. For example, in the Norwegian version Irgens highlights an ideal that Nordic literature traditionally conveys to children, whereas Celej is more interested in offering the reader an escapist experience. Therefore, the messages that Norwegian and Spanish readers receive are different. Without the illustrations, both editions would convey the same meaning, and the only difference would be the language of the text. Consequently, a comparison of the two sets of illustrations of *Tonje Glimmerdal* illuminates the impact illustrations can have on a text, and how illustrations create new meanings.

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