

International Conference *The Child and the Book 2013: Children's Literature, Technology and Imagination. Research, Problems and Perspectives*

Padua (Italy), 21 – 23 March 2013

The Research Group for Children's Literature (GRILLI) of the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology (FISPPA) of the University of Padua (Italy), supervised by Donatella Lombello, hosted from 21 to 23 March 2013 the Ninth International *Child and the Book Conference*. This important scholarly event every year attracts delegates from all over the world and offers a unique opportunity for postgraduate students to present and discuss their work, in the presence of established scholars. This interdisciplinary event was inaugurated in 2004 at Roehampton University. It was then hosted in 2005 by the University of Antwerp, in 2006 by the University of Newcastle in the UK, in 2007 by the Department of Western Languages and Literature at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2008 by Buffalo State University in Upstate New York, USA, in 2009 by Vancouver Island University, Canada, in 2011 by the University of Norway, in 2012 by the Department of Education at Cambridge University, and in 2013 by FISPPA.

The *Child and the Book Conference 2013* dealt with themes under the title *Children's Literature, Technology and Imagination. Research, Problems and Perspectives*. There are many educational reasons behind the choice of this topic. Imagination is central to the life experience of a child because it allows him or her to interpret events, putting together a causal pattern which makes it possible to blend what is known about a situation (facts) with a relevant plausible hypothesis (imagination). Imagination is a specific ability of the human mind. Scholars, critics and writers like Sartre (1940), Bachelard (1967), Durand (1972) dealt with this issue and proposed controversial theories. According to Vygotsky (1972), the imaginative ability is a combinatorial activity that allows adults and children to imagine a future or past event and to create new images and actions, and this is possible because an individual is not only able to preserve the traces of his or her actions (memory), but also to modify them using the imagination. This process is fundamental for child development, and children's literature represents a great resource to promote it.

The technological dimension is becoming increasingly important in children's life, and children's experience with literature is often bound not only to traditional books but also to media literary texts. In contemporary society, children are exposed to an unceasing bombardment of verbal and visual stimuli thanks to new technological devices that have an impact on children's understanding and use of literature in their everyday lives. The following questions consequently arise: How does the technological dimension affect children's imagination? What kind of role do technological devices play in contemporary children's literature? How do new technological devices (applications or 'apps', audio books, multiplatform books, enhanced electronic picturebooks, etc.) change children's approach to children's literature? What, for instance, do touch-screen picturebooks add to children's reading experiences? How do multimedia book apps impact on young readers' imagination?

During the conference, scholars and young researchers of different countries (Brazil, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Norway, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA)

explored and considered possible answers to all these questions by presenting their research results and investigations carried out in many different fields.

Many topics were discussed: the approach of new technologies in children's literature (Antoneli Matos, Eve Tandoi, Anika Ullmann), new technological book devices for children (Celia Turrión, Hadassah Stichnothe, Janet Evans), books, young readers and digital resources (Marianne Martens, Dorothea Michulka, Emilyya Ohar), children's imagination, picturebooks and technology (Cristina Aliagas, Ana Maria Margallo, Marnie Campagnaro, Zahra Amlani), children's literature and media (Ture Schwebs, Xavier Minguez Lopez), new technologies and reading practices (Mireira Manresa, Ana Maria Margallo, Catherine Ann Cullen), children's literature and digital storytelling (Maria Alcantud Diaz, Aline Frederico), new approaches in non-fiction children's books (Anna Cristini, Ross Buckingham), glocalism, science and technology in children's books (Daniela Sideri, Kati Voigt, Jessica Hancock), the relationships of books, technology and language development (Rossella Caso, Maria Alcantud Diaz, Raffaella Cantillo), children's literature and cultural approaches (Catherine Posey, Mirella Piacentini, Linda Torresin), and finally the historical evolution of children's press (Angelo Nobile, Katarzyna Biernacka-Licznar, Bogumila Staniów).

The conference was introduced by the keynote speaker, Jerry Griswold, a well-known USA specialist in children's literature, who presented an inspiring lecture on the *History and Philosophy of Toys, Devices and Gadgets in Children's Literature (and Vice Versa)*. Unfortunately, the appealing lecture of Gino Roncaglia, one of the most important Italian scholars investigating new media and digital humanities, entitled *Children's Fandom and Fan Fiction*, unfortunately did not take place due to the speaker's illness.

The panel discussion *Submitting Articles to Children's Literature Journals: Criteria and Journal Selection* run by Nina Goga, Vanessa Joosen and Jerry Griswold was much appreciated by young researchers, who could take note of some important guidelines to improve the academic quality of their articles and discover new and very promising online resources on children's literature, such as the *Nordic Journal of ChildLit Aesthetics*.

The abundance of topics, the opportunity to discuss each paper closely with an audience of colleagues and experts in the field, the presentation of results of some very recent and interesting instances of field research on the relationship between technological devices and contemporary children's literature, as well as the informal and pleasant atmosphere, which helped researchers and the audience establish good relationships with each other and plan future collaboration, made the *Child and the Book Conference* a very enriching and inspiring occasion.

For all these reasons, everyone is looking forward to next year when Greece will organize the *Child and the Book Conference 2014* in Athens.

Marnie Campagnaro