



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of Education

### **Past visiting scholars to the Children's Literature Centre say...**

"Going to Cambridge and meeting PhD students from the 'Centre for Children's Literature' was a great opportunity to meet and discuss our projects with others who work on issues related to our own (questions of multimodality, intermediality, and children's media), but who has framed and developed their projects and competences on the basis of disciplinary backgrounds and influences different to those of our own. This provided a chance to practice and refine our interdisciplinary communication skills and argumentation in a friendly atmosphere as well as getting inputs and insights from new angles. I see these kind of symposiums as a great chance to get 'fresh' perspectives on my work as well as a chance to practice these communicative and argumentative skills, which should both prove useful at future conferences and when aiming to publish in different journals, which might differ in their discursive styles and perspectives."

### **Two professors and three PhD students, 2017, from The Centre for Intermediality and Multimodality, Linnaeus University, Sweden**

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"Thank you, Professor Nikolajeva and Dr Jaques, for providing an outstanding academic experience for the study abroad students from the University of South Florida. I truly appreciate all of your efforts to accommodate our group during a very busy time in your academic year. From the moment we arrived, we felt warmly welcomed by you, the staff, and the students. You arranged an excellent series of events that allowed our students to engage in intellectual conversations about children's literature as we explored the resources of the Cambridge/Homerton Research and Teaching Centre for Children's Literature.

On our first day, we visited the Homerton Library where Liz Osman introduced the children's literature collection and talked about children's books as material objects. We viewed many different *Alice in Wonderland* editions and movable books—which served as a nice connection to our Alice collection at USF Library. We also toured the Faculty of Education Library where Angela Cutts introduced the library collections and talked about the different services they provide to students and faculty.

These library visits served as an excellent precursor for the talks by your doctoral students. Our students, who ranged from undergraduate to doctoral level, genuinely benefitted from the doctoral student session in which we learned about your students' unique research projects and how they selected their topics and engage in deep explorations of children's literature. For the USF undergraduate students, these talks were vital in helping them understand how to study children's literature in systematic and scholarly ways. For the graduate students, these talks helped them refine and conceptualize their own work. Your students truly inspired our students.

Of course, one of the highlights of the experience was the Formal Dinner in the Great Hall. Our students gained a strong sense of the culture and traditions of Homerton College when they realized that Harry Potter's experiences at Hogwarts actually imitated life. Thank you for arranging the dinner for our students and allowing them to glimpse life as a student in Cambridge.

We also appreciated the efforts made to allow our students to participate in the *Book as Material Object Conference*. We feel especially fortunate that we were able to hear from a series of speakers who addressed a central question about books in the digital age. Our students were challenged and

fascinated by the discussions and presentations. For many of them, this was their first academic conference and they were intrigued by the experience.

Our encounters with you, your students, and the visiting scholars who presented at the conference allowed the USF students to explore children's literature and to develop theoretical connections to texts in many ways. Our experiences at the University of Cambridge/Homerton College far exceeded our expectations and we are very appreciative of your efforts on our behalf. Thank you for supporting our students during their study abroad.

**Jenifer Jasinski Schneider, 2017, Professor at University of South Florida, USA**

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#### **Comments from USF students about their visit:**

In talking with the Ph.D. students in the Children's Literature program, it became more clear to me that following your passion leads to confidence and true expertise.

One of my big take-aways was something I saw in the Faculty of Education library. The library was completely organized around the needs of pre-service teachers. They had artefact boxes that the students could check out and use in classrooms. They are organized around a theme and include books, toys, and actual cultural artefacts. I'm going to use this concept and structure with my children's literature classes in the future.

(Gretchen Dodson)

Our talk with the librarian from Homerton's children's literature collection was a great start to our time at Cambridge. I really appreciated her talk as she provided some foundational tools for looking at the critical issues in Children's Literature.

The *Children's Book as Material Object* conference at Homerton was an invaluable experience. I feel really lucky to have heard Phil Nel speak about a work that has been close to me for my entire life, *Harold and the Purple Crayon*. His analyses resonated with some of my longstanding but unrefined impressions of Johnson's work, and provided me with assurance that it will offer no diminishing returns as I grow beyond the age of the nominal audience.

(Jac Dickens)

During the lectures I was introduced to new ways of engaging with literature. Typically, my main focus is on the illustrations and how they help children make sense of text and story-telling.

(Amanda Aponte)

Sandra Williams' discussion on The *Ologies* series as objects for play was simply amazing. Her presentation was engaging and full of passion. Learning about how children are able to play with text rather than reading the text was one of my biggest take-aways from the *Book as Material Object* lectures.

The entire faculty at Cambridge was very welcoming and informative. I am thankful that they were so accommodating during this time of the school year. I cannot wait to take everything I learned during my short time at Cambridge and apply it in the future.

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"When I commenced my three months as a visiting scholar in Cambridge, I was warmly welcomed into the community of children's literature by my host Maria Nikolajeva. I was invited to participate in open research seminars at the faculty, and I also attended and presented at the 3rd Cambridge symposium on Cognitive Approaches to Children's Literature. It was highly relevant and beneficial for my research, and I made several new contacts of scholars within the field. The support and warmth I received from Maria, the librarians and the Faculty of Education staff made me very grateful and inspired. To utilize a Dahlesque analogy; the whole experience made me feel like the lucky winner of Willy Wonka's Golden Ticket!"

**Gro-Anita Myklevold, Assistant Professor and Visiting Scholar for 2017 from Ostfold University College, Norway**

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"When I was a child, I thought everything to do with fairies and elves was good, gentle, splendid and kind. Growing up meant learning that (spoilers!) elves weren't exclusively good - which is ok, if you also learn that "What memory loves becomes eternal" (Brazilian poet Adelia Prado). So, until proven otherwise, I'll continue to think of fairies and elves as kind creatures, and will shamelessly compare my stay in Cambridge to a fairy tale. And this feeling is due to the enchanting beings I met along the way. To begin with, the children - our reason, our end, our joy, my 'hands' - with their interpretation of Cecilia Meireles' poems, they helped me gather the essential data to wrap up my thesis. Their eagerness and joy also produced some of the fondest memories I will carry with me for the rest of my life. So thank you, wonderful children of Thriplow and King David Primary Schools, and teachers and head-teachers Victoria, Becky, Stephen and Caroline, for believing in my project so openheartedly! But no wrapping up would be possible without my hosts, David Whitley and Maria Nikolajeva. Maria welcomed me into a group of passionate researchers, who not only shared their knowledge with us visitors, but also gave us a tender sense of belonging. Thank you, Aline, Lucy, Meghanne, Jen, Maria...! And thank you also to David, for being there through the highs and lows, and for granting me the letter that worked as the 'Open Sesame' for the treasure doors. Dear prospective visiting scholar, if you once believed in fairies, do not lose faith. The Center for Children's Literature is for real. And for good."

**Telma Franco Diniz, PhD Student and Visiting Scholar for 2016 from Sao Paulo University, Brazil**

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"I was a visiting scholar at the Centre for Children's Literature for five weeks. At this time I was about to finish my doctoral thesis. I felt that I needed to become part of a community of scholars which studies children's literature, both in order to improve my thesis, and in order to get inspiration for new research projects. Without a doubt, my short but extremely intense visit to the Faculty helped me reach my goals. I gave a talk where I presented my study, visited seminars, participated in reading and writing groups, worked in the library with its extremely helpful staff, and was able to establish connections with scholars within my own field of research. My host, Professor Maria Nikolajeva, and the Ph.D. students made me feel very welcome, and I was inspired by how the Ph.D. students support each other in their individual projects. For anyone who studies children's literature, I can highly recommend being a visiting scholar in this environment, especially since the research community consists of academics from so many different parts of the world. My train from King's Cross did not transport me to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, but being a visiting scholar at the Centre for Children's Literature was a truly magical experience!"

**Malin Alkestrand, PhD Student and Visiting Scholar for 2015 from Lund University, Sweden**

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"I had an extraordinary experience as a visiting scholar at the Centre for Children's Literature for one year. Being part of such a vibrant and international community of researchers broadened my horizons in unexpected ways. Besides finding precious resources for my current research, I made friends for life and developed ideas for future joint projects. As a researcher in picturebooks, I had great time meeting my colleagues every other week at the Picturebook Club, where we examined interesting books, discussed stimulating articles and exchanged impressions about our investigations. We had access not only to the wonderful libraries at the Faculty of Education and Homerton College, but also the University Library. My host, Maria Nikolajeva, was very welcoming and encouraging, and I am very thankful to her for granting me such a unique opportunity."

**Claudia Mendes, PhD Student and Visiting Scholar for 2015 from Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**

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"I have been a visiting scholar in Cambridge to further my research for one year. This experience will always be a treasured memory for me. I enjoyed the libraries so much not only because of the innumerable fantastic books but also the warm-hearted librarians who helped me a lot. I also enjoyed the seminars which have opened my mind and offered good opportunities to communicate with other scholars and students who encouraged me very much. Finally, I really do appreciate Professor Maria Nikolajeva who brought me to Cambridge and I hope very much that I could have other opportunities to return. What a wonderful place it is!"

**Yaqiong Ma, 2015, PhD Student, Beijing Normal University, China**

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"I spent one month at the Faculty of Education as a visiting scholar, researching on picturebooks. Although it was quite a short visit, it was a very fruitful experience, as I had the opportunity to meet scholars specialized in children's literature as well as PhD students, and I was delighted to attend several activities at the Faculty. I could also work at the libraries in Homerton College and in the Faculty of Education, where I found reference books and children's literature texts, which were very useful for my research. Finally, I would like to thank the researchers, library staff and, in general, all the people at the Faculty of Education for their kindness and helpfulness."

**María del Rosario Neira Piñeiro, 2015, Lecturer, University of Oviedo, Spain**

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"I was a visiting scholar with the Faculty of Education for one year. One year sounds like a long time but it went very quickly. Apart from being a very pleasant and well equipped place for private study, the faculty has a number of seminars and talks which visiting scholars can attend, as do other departments, so I had plenty of opportunities to meet and talk other people studying in the same areas as myself. The faculty has links with many other institutions and the quality and variety of the talks and conferences was fabulous. I study children's literature and it was a real pleasure to be able to meet and talk with other people who are interested in the same things. All in all I had a very enjoyable, and highly stimulating year."

**Dominic Cheetham, 2015, Lecturer, Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan**

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"I chose the Centre for Children's Literature at the University of Cambridge to have my sabbatical leave as a visiting scholar because the center is where I can interact with my host Maria Nikolajeva, one of the best scholars in the field of children's literature. She was hospitable and courteous, which I

appreciate. The library has a wonderful collection of reference books so that I could read and study them as much as I like. The staffs of the library were very friendly and kindly helped me to find the desired reference books. Most importantly, I could experience the heated discussion with young talented scholars and have many chances to take part in the various seminars presented by internationally renowned scholars of children's literature, which have led me into broadening my insight into children's literature. So, I was able to develop my research and find new research subjects during my stay there. All my experience in Cambridge was beyond imagination! I strongly recommend you to study at the children's literature center' in Cambridge. I'd like to thank my host Maria for making it all possible."

**Younhee Byun, 2015, Associate Professor, Tongmyong University, South Korea**

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"The one-year visiting to Centre for Children's Literature is fruitful. I benefit greatly from the seminars and lectures, the large collection of reference books in the libraries, as well as the discussions with the smart PhD students and distinguished scholars at Cambridge, without which it will be impossible for me to finish my research program. It's one of the most fascinating experiences in my life, and I believe I will never forget those days at the centre. I hope I have opportunity to visit the center and meet with the fellows again in the future."

**Xiaolan Wang, 2014, Professor, Nanchang Institute of Technology, China**

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"I've recently completed my third and longest research stay at the Centre. It's been great to experience an environment that's characterised by so accommodating administrative staff, inspiring researchers and committed students. In addition, all conversations with the many other visiting scholars who are in the faculty were very special. I don't think I've ever left a single one of these conversations without instantaneously going over to my desk and improving my research topic a little bit. I'll be back."

**Martin Blok Johansen, 2013, Associate Professor, VIA University College, Denmark**

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"I believe I can describe my experience as the reading of a new book. I didn't know exactly what to expect, but at the end when I turned the last page I felt richer in many ways, not only from a working point of view but also on a personal level. My time in Cambridge hasn't been just writing and researching in well furnished libraries, as I thought it would have, but it has also, and above all, been creating bonds with other PhD students and researchers. Indeed, the Faculty of Education is not just a faculty, it is a lively community. A community who gathers together in inspiring seminars or simply in front of a nice coffee or tea in the common area, where you can share ideas and doubts with other researchers. Mine has been an experience, though rather short, that I would recommend to all young researchers."

**Melissa Garavini, 2013, PhD Student, University of Turku, Turku, Finland**

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"Apart from being an institution where I conducted a significant part of my research, the Cambridge/Homerton Research and Teaching Centre for Children's Literature turned out to be a place where I was truly welcomed by Prof. Maria Nikolajeva-who was immensely helpful and concerned-and her colleagues as well as the students. I also had the opportunity to meet visiting scholars from different countries, and enjoyed the company of the friendly and supportive staff of the Faculty of Education. I cannot imagine a superior academic experience!"

**Bahar Gürsel, 2013, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey**

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"My visit to the Centre was extraordinarily pleasant and productive. The staff and students were incredibly welcoming and collegial, allowing me a receptive venue in which to share my work. In my turn, I learned an enormous amount from the dynamic research and teaching culture and delight in children's literature that pervades this wonderful place."

**Elizabeth Hale, 2012-13, Associate Professor, University of New England, Armidale, Australia**

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"I enjoyed every moment of my work and research at at the Cambridge/Homerton Research and Teaching Centre for Children's Literature. I was welcomed into lectures, seminars, as well as research meetings, and I felt like a student again, a student within an incredibly intellectually challenging environment."

**Elpiniki Nikoloudaki-Souri, 2012, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Crete, Greece**

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"I spent a year as a visiting scholar, researching reading and libraries in the Brazilian state. Being in Cambridge was a very rich and fruitful experience for me."

**Rosane de Bastos Pereira, 2011-12, PhD student, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil**

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"It was a wonderful year for me in this centre. There were so many fantastic things: attending various courses and seminars, learning from distinguished teachers, discussion with active students and visiting scholars from other countries, and reading the abundant books in the libraries. All of these have improved my research."

**Fengxia Tan, 2010-11, Ph.D, Associate Professor, Nanjing Normal University, China**

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"I spent two months in Cambridge developing a children's literature course for my university. I will always remember this time as an enriching academic and personal experience. I very much appreciated the hospitality and support of Professor Nikolajeva, who not only helped me with my research but introduced me to the academic world of Cambridge and put me in touch with other professors and visiting scholars. I especially enjoyed the camaraderie of my colleagues at the university."

**Dr. Javier de la Peña, 2011, Madrid Universidad, Madrid, Spain**

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"My visit has been a most fruitful one. Research never comes to a standstill here. There is always an array of equally interesting activities to choose from, the atmosphere is friendly and the people are very helpful and nice. What more could a visiting scholar want?"

**Roshanak Pashae, 2011, PhD student, Tehran University, Iran**

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“I could not have been made more welcome ... the lecturers took me into their classes and provided me with plenty of opportunities to discuss my own work as well. These discussions resulted in the production of an article and the emergence of a slightly new direction for my research project. The opening of the Centre for Children’s Literature has made it even easier to visit.”

**Dr. Lydia Kokkola, 2010, Collegium Researcher at the Turku Institute for Advanced studies (TIAS), Turku, Finland**