

# Making Tutorial Films on Picture Books in Teacher Education

## La creación de videotutoriales sobre álbumes ilustrados en la formación del profesorado

## La creació de videotutorials sobre àlbums il·lustrats en la formació del professorat

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### Abstract

In this article we analyze two films about picturebooks, made in student-led groups in a children's literature course at university level. We also investigate the self-assessments the students wrote. The assignment was designed to explore specific Norwegian picturebooks, in this case *Snill (What a girl!)* by Gro Dahle and Svein Nyhus and *Garmanns hemmelighet (Garmann's secret)* by Stian Hole. Our aim is to highlight ways this assignment expanded the students' knowledge on picturebooks and literature didactics. For this purpose, we build upon picturebook theory, theories on multimodality and theories on collaborative learning processes.

Our findings support results and ideas in other studies on how to use and produce multimodal artefacts and digitized media in collaborative learning contexts (Jewitt, 2006; Jewitt, 2013; Kress & Selander, 2011; Selander, 2015), and studies on the potential of collaborative teaching and learning processes, and of students' self-assessments (Alexander, 2017). Both films present and discuss the interplay between words and images in ways that demonstrate solid knowledge of picturebook theory. The analyses also indicate that this kind of film-making project may foster a high degree of student engagement suited to achieve in-depth knowledge on topics within the field of children's literature.

**Key words:** picturebooks, multimodality, film making, literature didactics, teacher education

## Resumen

En este artículo analizamos dos cortometrajes sobre álbumes ilustrados, realizados por grupos de estudiantes en un curso de literatura infantil a nivel universitario. También investigamos las autoevaluaciones que escribieron los mismos estudiantes. El trabajo fue diseñado para explorar álbumes ilustrados noruegos específicos, en este caso Snill (Amable) de Gro Dahle y Svein Nyhus y Garmanns hemmelighet (El secreto de Garmann) d'Stian Hole. Nuestro objetivo es mostrar las maneras en las que este trabajo de aula incrementó el conocimiento del estudiantado sobre los álbumes ilustrados y la didáctica de la literatura. Con este propósito, nos basamos en la teoría de los álbumes ilustrados, en las teorías sobre multimodalidad y en teorías sobre procesos de aprendizaje colaborativo.

Nuestros hallazgos apoyan los resultados e ideas de otros estudios respecto de cómo se utilizan y producen los artefactos multimodales y los medios digitalizados en contextos de aprendizaje colaborativo (Jewitt, 2006; Jewitt, 2013; Kress & Selander, 2011; Selander, 2015) y en estudios sobre el potencial de los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje colaborativo y de autoevaluación del alumnado (Alexander, 2017). Los dos cortometrajes presentan y analizan la interacción entre palabras e imágenes de manera que demuestran un conocimiento sólido de la teoría sobre los álbumes ilustrados. El análisis también indica que este tipo de proyecto de realización de videotutoriales puede alimentar un alto nivel de involucración del alumnado que permita conseguir un conocimiento profundo de temas en el campo de la literatura infantil.

**Palabras clave:** álbumes ilustrados, multimodalidad, realización de cortometrajes, didáctica de la literatura, formación de profesorado

## Resum

En aquest article analitzem dos curtmetratges sobre àlbums il·lustrats, realitzats per grups d'estudiants en un curs de literatura infantil a nivell universitari. També investiguem les autoavaluacions que van escriure els mateixos estudiants. El treball va ser dissenyat per explorar àlbums il·lustrats noruecs específics, en aquest cas *Snill* (Amable) de Gro Dahle i Svein Nyhus i *Garmanns hemmelighet* (El secret de Garmann) d'Stian Hole. El nostre objectiu és mostrar les maneres en les quals aquest treball d'aula va incrementar el coneixement de l'estudiantat sobre els àlbums il·lustrats i la didàctica de la literatura. Per a aquest propòsit, ens basem en la teoria dels àlbums il·lustrats, en les teories sobre multimodalitat i en teories sobre processos d'aprenentatge col·laboratiu.

Les nostres troballes donen suport als resultats i les idees d'altres estudis respecte de com s'utilitzen i produeixen els artefactes multimodals i els mitjans digitalitzats en contextos d'aprenentatge col·laboratiu (Jewitt, 2006; Jewitt, 2013; Kress & Selander, 2011; Selander, 2015) i en estudis sobre el potencial dels processos d'ensenyament-aprenentatge col·laboratiu i de autoavaluació de l'alumnat (Alexander, 2017). Tots dos curtmetratges presenten i analitzen la interacció entre paraules i imatges de manera que demostren un coneixement sòlid de la teoria sobre els àlbums il·lustrats. L'anàlisi també indica que aquest tipus de projecte de videotutorials pot nodrir un alt nivell d'involucració de l'alumnat que permeti assolir un coneixement profund de temes en el camp de la literatura infantil.

**Paraules clau:** àlbums il·lustrats, multimodalitat, realització de curtmetratges, didàctica de la literatura, formació de professorat.

## 1. Introduction

This article discusses experiences from a film making project in student-led groups performed in a children's literature course at university level. The discussion is based on a student assignment designed to explore specific picturebooks by making tutorial films using digital tools. The student films include reflections on picturebook aesthetics as well as ideas on how to present, discuss and work with picturebooks in educational settings. The article investigates ways the films demonstrate competencies in these fields, along with how and to what extent the assignments showcase multimodal qualities, filmic devices, and digital competences. Since the students worked on the films in groups, the article also reflects upon collaborative learning processes.

The film project involved 50 teachers who, during the fall 2019 and the spring 2020, joined an in-service course at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. These teachers, all employed in primary or secondary schools, attended the course with the aim of upgrading their competences within the subject Norwegian language and literature. This type of student group, which involves adults with substantial work experiences, calls for teaching methods and mediation of knowledge suited to support their professional roles and practices (Säljö, 2006; Timperley, 2011). The task of teaching children's literature at in-service courses for teachers has not been subject to much research, and thus, this article contributes to filling this gap. However, the research project should be relevant to various children's literature courses at university level and not restricted to courses specifically designed for in-service teachers.

While there is a substantial body of literature concerning the use of picturebook in school settings, there is not a great deal of research on the use of picturebooks in teacher education (Daly & Blakeney-Williams 2015, p. 90). Among the few studies that exist, there are examples of research on how picturebooks may be used across various curricula and subjects (Daly & Blakeney-Williams, 2015; Meyerson, 2006). Our article contributes to the field by investigating a picturebook project at university level specifically related to the topics of children's literature and literature didactics. Our study is thus framed by this research question: *In which ways may students in teacher education expand their knowledge on picturebooks and literature didactics through a process of film making in student-led groups?*

**While there is a substantial body of literature concerning the use of picturebook in school settings, there is not a great deal of research on the use of picturebooks in teacher education**

## 2. The research material: contextual frames and selection of data material

Our research project involves two categories of research material: 1) student films made in groups of three to five students, and 2) individual self-assessments. The films represent the final group productions, while the self-assessments express the students' individual experiences.

To ensure that every picturebook from the reading list was represented in the total amount of student films, we, as course instructors, selected one specific book for each group. The seven picturebooks, all by awarded Norwegian picturebook creators, span several topics, such as identity issues, various relational issues, environmental challenges, philosophical questions, and Sami culture. They also represent different verbal and visual styles, and various types of interactions between words and images. Though each group made a film on only one picturebook, the students were acquainted with all seven books in an introductory lecture prior to the film project. Moreover, as part of the semester's final seminar, all the films were presented to and discussed with fellow students. Thus, the term "tutorial film" signals a purpose of learning potential, not only as the result of the filmmaking process, but also by watching and discussing the films produced by other course participants.

The total scope of research material involves 12 student films and 55 self-assessments. For this article, the research material is limited to include two student films and seven self-assessments. In addition, we touch upon some aspects from the total scope of self-assessments. Since the article addresses an international audience, we have selected films which present and discuss two books that have earned international attention. One is *Garmanns hemmelighet* (*Garmann's secret*), by the author/illustrator Stian Hole, first published in 2010. The book is the third one in a trilogy about the boy Garmann, a series translated into many languages, following the success of the first book *Garmanns sommer* (*Garmann's summer*), which earned several international awards. The other book is *Snill* (*What a girl!*) by Gro Dahle and Svein Nyhus, first published in 2002 and later republished several times. This book is also translated into other languages and represents one among several awarded picturebooks by Dahle and Nyhus.

The investigations and discussions of the research material are based on some certain premises. The students live in different parts of the country, and therefore they had to communicate on digital platforms. However, they also met in classes on campus, organized as two-day seminars three times per semester. Furthermore, the assignment instructions accentuate that all group members should contribute to the process of filmmaking, and all of them should be seen and heard in the final film product.

### 3. Methodological and ethical considerations

The analyses of films and self-assessments build upon qualitative research methods which support in-depth investigations and “thick description” of a limited selection of data material (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 247). Thus, our analyses cannot lead to general conclusions on students’ learning experiences. Rather, the method of qualitative research allows us to focus on multi-faceted aspects of the limited material of films and self-assessments.

The article’s methodological framework is furthermore based on multimodal analyses related to the film medium and to the picturebook medium. This includes observations and discussions of how the students comment on and display interactions of verbal and visual modes in the picturebooks and how the films combine modes of verbal text, visual images, sound effects and motion pictures.

Research on projects and assignments based on researchers’ own teaching and own student group demands careful ethical considerations (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 112). Thus, our research project has been subject to notification and approval by The Norwegian Centre for Research Data, and we confirm that we exclusively use data material from participants who have given their consent.

### 4. Theoretical approaches

Picturebook theory and reflections on literature didactics make a fundamental framework for the discussion of the film products. Since the students’ main theoretical sources are based on Norwegian textbooks and articles on their reading list, our evaluations of theoretical insights implied in the films are mainly based on the course syllabus (Birkeland et al., 2018; Bjerke & Johansen, 2017; Håland & Ulland, 2014; Ommundsen, 2018).

Another theoretical frame relates to new approaches to teaching and learning processes due to the continuous expansion of multimodal and digital technologies. Several researchers point to the inclusion of teaching and learning practices that allow students to use and produce multimodal artefacts and digitized media in collaborative learning contexts (Jewitt, 2006; Jewitt, 2013; Kress & Selander, 2011; Selander, 2015). The film making project described in this article is inspired by these perspectives.

In an article from 2015, Staffan Selander, a researcher within the field of digital and multimodal learning design, relates the multimodal approach to “a Scandinavian tradition of project-oriented and problem-based learning and also to historically strong traditions of evening courses, re-education and further education” (p. 101). This aligns well with the context of our film making project. Selander combines his focus on learning strategies with social-semiotic theory (p. 105), with specific references to works by Gunther Kress, not the least to the well-known *Multimodality. A social semiotic approach*

to *contemporary communication* (Kress, 2010). On this basis, Selander (2015, p. 107) calls for learning designs which may allow interactions with other learners as well as with a multiple sources, including multimodal and digital texts, artefacts, devices, and tools. In an article from 2010, Kress and Selander claim that multimodal approaches to learning “will lead to a culture of recognition of agency and semiotic work, in all modes and genres” and to “a valuing of the agency of all learners” (p. 268).

The film project’s emphasis on a collaborative learning context is inspired by the multimodal approach as described above. However, the project also relates to dialogic principles of learning in a wider sense. In *Towards dialogic teaching* (2017), Robin Alexander advocates a dialogic pedagogy which favours classroom talks, group talks, and problem-solving activities based on collaborative negotiations and inquires. This dialogic principle reflects an understanding of knowledge “as fluid rather than fixed,” a democratic view that allows for “treating teachers and pupils as joint enquirers” (p. 29). According to Alexander, the principles of dialogic teaching and learning have the potential to foster lifelong learning, and thus, they are valid not only for children, but also “for the learning of adults, including teachers” (p. 53). Also, Alexander’s valuing of students’ self-assessments is relevant to our project. He claims that “being ‘attentive to what students say about their experience of learning’ is, for the dialogic teacher, the *sine qua non*” (p. 35), and thus, he accentuates a shift from a focus on *what* students learn to *how* they learn.

## 5. Analyses of films and self-assessments

In this section we present and analyze elements from the two student films and from self-assessments by these students. The analyses discuss various qualities in the films based on three categories which arise from the article’s theoretical framework: 1) Picturebook aesthetics and picturebook didactics, 2) Multimodal and digital competences, and 3) Dialogic learning processes.

Within the first category we investigate how the films demonstrate students’ ability to analyze visual and verbal aesthetics in a specific picturebook and their ability to reflect upon how to present, discuss and work with picturebooks in a classroom context. The second category involves questions on how the students have applied and emphasized multimodal qualities and digital tools in their films. The last category points to how the films signal cooperative efforts during the process of film making. The film analyses are supplemented by findings in the students’ self-assessments.

## 6. Student film 1: Based on *What a girl!* by Gro Dahle and Svein Nyhus

### 6.1. The picturebook: Content and characteristics

The original Norwegian title of the book *Snill* (2004) means kind or gentle and refers to the book’s main character, a little girl, who in the first part of the story acts like a very neat and well-behaved girl.

The English title *What a girl!* (2011) refers to the girl's status as a role model to be admired. However, both titles also indicate an ironic function due to the verbal and visual exaggerations of the girl's gentleness in the first part of the book, as well as to her transformation into a less well-behaved girl in the latter part. Further on we refer to and cite from the English title. However, the illustrations included in the article are reproductions from the Norwegian edition, to ensure they are in line with the edition on which the students based their films. The English edition was published in India with a parallel edition in Hindi, both aimed to be part of the "World Girl-Child Picture Book Project" with the purpose of bringing books and children together in rural India (Maagerø & Østbye, 2017, p. 186).

In the Norwegian text, the character is named Lussi, while in the English translation, she is called Sheelu. The book tells the story about how the neat and gentle Sheelu becomes almost invisible and finally disappears into the wall. After a while she fights herself out of the wall accompanied by a large scream. She is even able to help other silent females, young girls as well as adult women, to come out of the wall. From this point Sheelu develops into a strong and self-confident girl who no longer needs to be well-behaved and neat all the time.

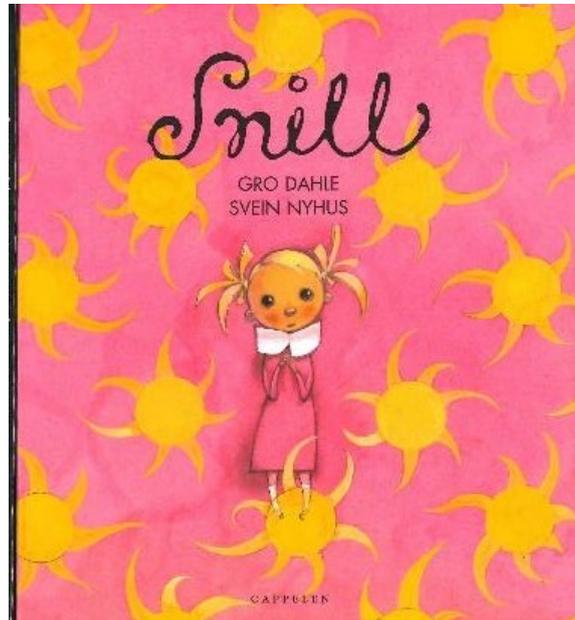
The book highlights topics like identity issues and gender roles, and the story about the little girl's fight for self-esteem has fascinated children as well as adults in various age groups. As pointed to by Maagerø and Østbye (2017, p. 169), the book has also been discussed by many student teachers as part of their curriculum at university. *What a girl!*, as well as other picturebooks by Dahle and Nyhus, have been acknowledged, not only because of the books' attentiveness to how vulnerable children cope with their lives, but not the least as a result of aesthetic qualities in words and images. In the analysis that follows, we investigate how the films present and discuss thematic issues as well as aesthetic qualities in *What a girl!*.

## 6.2. Film analysis

The film starts by presenting close ups from the book's front page (see figure 1), the prologue image and the two first double spreads. Moreover, the first scenes include examples of children's drawings of the Sheelu character made by the teachers' own pupils in primary school (see figure 2). Implicitly, the drawings demonstrate that the teachers have engaged their pupils in making visual responses to the story about Sheelu, and thus, the film early on includes a didactic element. The opening scenes furthermore display a moving camera effect by using cinematic devices like tilting, panning, and dissolving. The gradual shifts from one image to another create smooth connections

**Implicitly, the drawings demonstrate that the teachers have engaged their pupils in making visual responses to the story about Sheelu, and thus, the film early on includes a didactic element**

between the various images in the film sequence, thus, creating a well-composed rhythm of film clips. The visual images are supplemented by music. We hear the student group sing a traditional children's song with lyrics describing a child's intention of being nice and neat, dutiful and disciplined, and thus, the lyrics allude to the portrait of the gentle Sheelu. The film's one-minute introduction stands out as a multi-faceted prologue that demonstrates insights into the use of multimodal and filmic effects as well as insights in the picturebook's aesthetics and thematics.



**Figure 1.** *Snill* (2004) by Gro Dahle and Svein Nyhus, J. W. Cappelen (front cover).



**Figure 2.** A children's drawing of Lussi (Sheelu).

The next part of the film shifts to a more static scene in which one of the students gives a short introduction to verbal and visual qualities in various picturebooks by Dahle and Nyhus, winding up with an example from a double spread in *What a girl!*. The static impression of the scene is softened by

placing the speaker in front of a smart board showing images of the author, the illustrator, and the specific double spread. Thus, the scene displays a pedagogical context alluding to a classroom setting.

The third section of the film investigates ways the portrait of the nice and neat Sheelu recalls former ideals of child-upbringing. To illuminate this question, the students explore what they consider to be intertextual relations between the Sheelu portrait and representations of the ideal child in song texts written by the Norwegian song writer Margrethe Munthe (1850-1931). Munthe's song texts remained popular through the 1950s and 60s in Norway, and in 2010 a selection of her song lyrics was republished in a new song book edition. Some of her songs are still alive as classics in the Norwegian song canon, while others convey outdated views upon childhood and child upbringing. The film includes some recitals and melodies from Munthe's song titles like "Jeg skriker ikke jeg!" [No, I never yell!] and "Lille Lotte er så pen" [Little Lotte is so neat], both examples of lyrics that highlight the childhood ideal of being neat and well-disciplined. The song texts also promote the urge to live up to expectations from parents, teachers, and other adults. Through cross cuts between passages in Dahle's text and the song lyrics, similarities in choices of words become strikingly evident. One example is taken from double spread 3 in the picturebook: "Isn't Sheelu nice and sweet? / Oh, oh, oh, what a nice little girl! / Her mother's gold. / Her father's sunshine." Words and characterizations like these are easy to spot and hear also in the film's examples from Munthe's lyrics, which are presented by scans from the song book accompanied by children's voices singing "Little Lotte is so neat." Again, the students accentuate the use of music to be included in their film.

In today's Scandinavian societies the role of strong and active children with their own opinions are highly valued, and boys and girls alike are encouraged to speak up for their rights and needs (Maagerø & Østbye, 2017, p. 187). However, there are still children who for several reasons are not seen and understood well enough, and there are still ideals and expectations that may bring children and young adults into unwanted roles. In this respect, the Sheelu portrait, as well as the intertextual relations to Munthe's song lyrics, is of current interest, and these perspectives seem to be implied in the film.

To reflect on intertextual relations between *What a girl!* and Munthe's song lyrics is an original move by the students. This idea has not been touched upon in lectures in the course program or in any other sources as far as we know. Thus, the students' reflections on this point and the examples they include are based on their own choices worked out through common efforts within the group.

The fourth section of the film deals with close readings of selected double spreads. In this part the students apply knowledge about iconotext analysis, as described in their textbooks (Birkeland et al., 2018; Ommundsen, 2018). When commenting on various types of interactions between words and images, they emphasize examples of counterpointing, complementary and expanding principles, terms

based on the picturebook typology in *How Picturebooks Work* by Maria Nikolajeva & Carol Scott (2001, p. 12). Moreover, they point to specific devices in the picturebook's verbal texts and illustrations. By exemplifying the use of metaphors and similes, repetitions and contrasts, stave rhymes and assonance, various rhythmic effects, and the structure of verse lines in Gro Dahle's text, the presentation accentuates how the verbal storytelling includes distinct poetic qualities. While analyzing images, the group comments on specific elements from the paratexts as well as the double spreads, like the use of colors and various perspectives, and the significance of visual details. All in all, the students' iconotext analysis has a particular focus on verbal and visual portraits of Sheelu. In the following paragraphs we include examples from the students' iconotext analysis by commenting on their presentations of double spread 1 and 9 in the picturebook (see figure 3 and 4).

**While analyzing images, the group comments on specific elements from the paratexts as well as the double spreads, like the use of colors and various perspectives, and the significance of visual details. All in all, the students' iconotext analysis has a particular focus on verbal and visual portraits of Sheelu**



**Figure 3.** *Snill* (2004) by Gro Dahle and Svein Nyhus, J. W. Cappelen (doublespread 1).

As an example of a counterpointing relation between words and images, the film points to the iconotext of the first double spread in the story (see figure 3). The verbal text describes in poetic ways a quiet and dutiful, but also a smiling Sheelu:

Look at Sheelu!  
Look at Sheelu!

Look, how quiet she is!

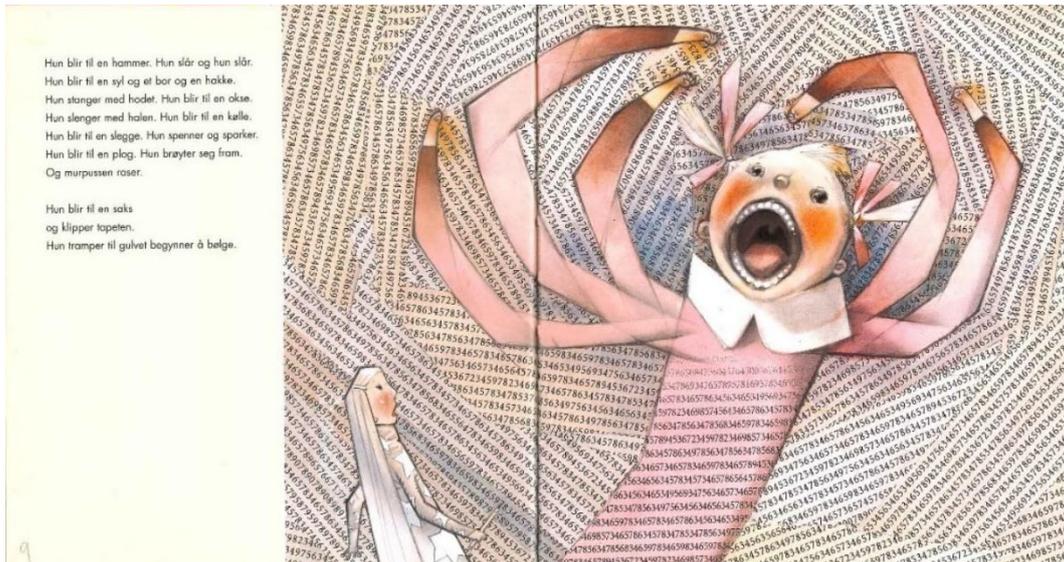
Quiet as white chalk and thin paper.  
Quiet like shiny glasses in a cupboard.

Because Sheelu does everything  
as she is supposed to.  
Look, how she smiles!  
Writes beautifully, reads from her book,  
nods, and smiles and puts up her hand.  
Her nice little hand.

Yes, look at Sheelu.  
What a girl!  
Yes, what a girl!

The visual portrait of the girl supports the impression of her quiet and disciplined behavior as described in the verbal text. However, the image contradicts the statements on Sheelu's smile by depicting her with a serious and maybe sad appearance. Thus, the film presents this scene as an example of a counterpointing interplay. The presence of a stone supplemented by faded flowers in a vase and a creased piece of paper on the table makes the contrasts between the verbal text and the visual scene even more evident. These visual details are not specifically mentioned in the film. However, in other parts of the film the students point to how details in Nyhus' illustrations may have various functions in the iconotext; they may support the verbal text as well as complement, expand on and contradict the words.

To a large degree, the film accentuates how Sheelu's transformation is described in words and images. One example points to how Sheelu's quiet appearance is compared to fragile things like "chalk and thin paper" and "thin shiny glasses" in the opening scene (double spread 1), while compared to sharp and hard things in a later scene: "Quiet as spikes and needles and sharp pins. / Quiet as screws and nails. / Quiet as a sting" (double spread 7). These stings of something hard proves to be the first signs of Sheelu's transformation, leading up to the story's climax, a scene which is highly accentuated in the film. The image of spread 9 shows a five-armed girl fighting herself out of the wall with a wide-opened mouth alluding to an angry outburst, and this scene plays a vital role in the last part of the film (see figure 4). The text supports and complements the image by describing how Sheelu turns into a hammer and various other tools to help her break out of the wall.



**Figure 4.** *Snill* (2004) by Gro Dahle and Svein Nyhus, J. W. Cappelen (doublespread 9).

The film's iconotext analysis as described above, is presented by slides with scans from specific picturebook spreads and a voice-over. This part the film applies no moving camera effects or other creative devices, and thus, the style of presentation appears as quite traditional. However, the analysis demonstrates solid knowledge of picturebook theory and insights in close reading of images as well as verbal texts.

The last scenes of the film repeat cinematic and multimodal effects applied in the opening scenes, and thus, the film creates a circular structure. The visual scenes in the ending show how Sheelu changes from being very orderly and humble to a girl who finally learns to stand up for herself. Sheelu's outburst described in spread 9 (see figure 4), and, also in spread 10, play a significant role in this section. Presentations of these illustrations are combined with images from children's drawings of Sheelu's fierce outcry, an element which makes an effectual contrast to the children's drawings of the nice and orderly Sheelu displayed in the film's intro (see figure 5).



**Figure 5.** A children's drawing of Sheelu's outburst.

Moreover, the visual representations of Sheelu's roar are accompanied by powerful soundtracks from the popular song "Roar" by Katy Perry. Parts of the song's lyrics relate quite astonishingly to the story about Sheelu, as shown by these quotes:

So, I sat quietly  
Agreed politely

I guess that I forgot I had a choice  
[...]  
You hear my voice  
You hear that sound

Like thunder, gonna shake the ground  
[...]  
You're gonna hear me roar

Again, the students have made an intertextual relation between *What a girl!* and song lyrics, this time to very different music than Munthe's children's song as presented in the first parts of the film.

## 7. Student film 2: Based on Garmann's secret by Stian Hole

### 7.1. The picturebook: Content and characteristics

As earlier mentioned, Stian Hole's picturebook *Garmann's secret* is the third picturebook in the trilogy about the boy Garmann. The English translation of the book by Don Bartlett was published in 2011. In this version, five of the spreads have been changed by the author-illustrator, as Johanna is given a swimsuit and a shirt so that she is no longer swimming naked, and Garmann no longer puts his finger directly on her back, but on her shirt. In another spread in the Norwegian version, Johanna is hanging up-side-down from a tree branch while Garmann is standing next to the tree peeing. In the translated version Garmann is left out of this spread. To be in line with the edition the student films are based on, the reproductions of spreads are taken from the Norwegian edition.

The book series tells the story about how the boy Garmann explores his surroundings and his relations to people around him. In the first book, *Garmann's summer*, the story takes place in his home and garden, in *Garmann's street*, in his neighborhood, and in *Garmann's secret*, in his schoolyard and the nearby woods. In the last book Hole tells a story about how Garmann and his friend Johanna steal away to explore secrets in the woods, secrets about each other and thoughts about life, nature, the earth, and outer space. The scenes with Garmann and Johanna playing in the woods revolve around their conversations and reflections just as much as their actions.

Stian Hole is well-known for his visual techniques, making colorful digital collages of photos and drawings. His picturebooks have an abundance of visual details for the reader to discover. As Tom

Barthelme puts it in his review: “The dreamlike photo-collage artwork mixes contemporary images with ones borrowed from the past (Elvis and other vintage figures can be seen in a local parade), as well as botanical and astrological prints, for a heightened, surreal effect” (Barthelme, 2011). Characterizing Hole’s collages as “dreamlike” aligns well with the illustrator’s own description of his techniques. Hole (2008, p. 159) has explained that he for several years looked for a suitable tool to make his digital collages, until he found the Photoshop image editing software, a program which allows him to make illusions of seamless collages. Garmann’s face can consist of up to 30 different seamless pieces, Hole states (p. 159). The effect of this layer upon layer of photographs is that the characters’ faces may look familiar at first sight, but when you look closer, they could be anyone. Kristin Ørjasæter (2014) points to how the visual aesthetics in the books about Garmann has a hypermediated character that invites the reader to sense and experience the images as encounters between the real and the virtual world.

## 7.2. Film analysis

In this film Hole’s aesthetic universe sets the tone from the start. The opening displays double spread 4, a scene from a Norwegian Constitution Day parade (see figure 6), accompanied by a few seconds of a march traditionally played in these parades. The sound clip is the only piece of music heard in the film. In this scene, Elvis Presley appears in front of the parade supported on each side by the girl twins Hanna and Johanna, two child characters who appear in all three Garmann books. However, suddenly in the next film clip the viewer discovers that there is a vital change in the parade scene. The film makers have replaced the faces of Elvis and the girls with small portraits of themselves implemented into Hole’s illustration. This play with Hole’s collage-technique, combined with the sound of a marching band, gives a humoristic start and creates an immediate contact between the students and the spectators.

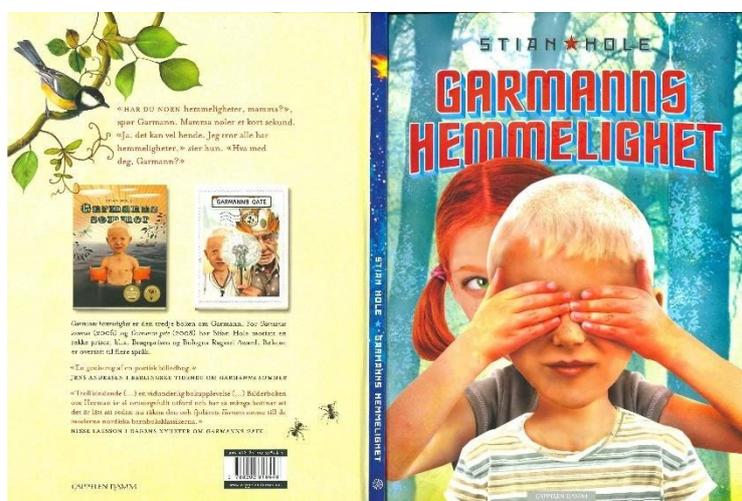


**Figure 6.** *Garmanns hemmelighet* by Stian Hole, Cappelen Damm (double spread 4).

The next scene is set in a library. Here one of the students has put herself in front of a bookshelf displaying picturebooks, amongst them *Garmann's secret*. The student is looking straight into the camera speaking about the importance of offering children a wide range of books to read. She accentuates the teachers' mission to lead the pupils into a rich text culture. The use of close ups of a student addressing the spectator establishes a personal presence and proximity to the spectators. The film continues with cross cuts between the live action scenes in the library and scenes with a full screen image from the endpapers of *Garmann's secret* accompanied by voice over comments. This part of the film includes a short presentation of other books by Hole and information about his photoshop technique. The various shifts between live action scenes and voice-over scenes demonstrate the capacity to create variety and rhythmic effects by means of cinematic devices.

The third film section presents an analysis of *Garmann's secret*. To limit the scope of their analysis, the students point to the need for selecting some main elements to highlight. The choices they have made involve the book's paratexts and some selected scenes mainly from the schoolyard and the woods. The discussion includes the questions of how Garmann and other main characters are introduced and how the characters' personalities and relations are described by words and images. The students' comments on their selection criteria demonstrate insights in the book's aesthetics and storytelling, as well as reflections on what restrictions and possibilities the making of a film with a time limit of ten minutes may offer.

**The students' comments on their selection criteria demonstrate insights in the book's aesthetics and storytelling, as well as reflections on what restrictions and possibilities the making of a film with a time limit of ten minutes may offer.**



**Figure 7.** *Garmanns hemmelighet* (2010) by Stian Hole, Cappelen Damm (back and front cover).

In their paratext analysis, the students comment on elements from the book cover, the endpapers, the imprint page, and the title page. The front cover image describes a scene with Garmann and a girl right behind him holding her hands over his eyes (see figure 7). In the film, the display of the front cover is accompanied by a voice-over explaining that the illustration, combined with the book title placed directly above the children's heads, invites the reader to wonder about what secret the book may involve. After the front cover introduction, the film shows a hand flicking through most of the pages, thus, giving an idea of the book's dimensions. This move lets the viewer glance into the book's visual universe. The next clip shows the endpapers' depiction of a starry sky and a space capsule, and the voice-over states that this may reinforce the readers' wonders about what secrets the book keeps.

The following clips focus on various elements on the imprint page and the title page. The collage includes several references to the Soviet cosmonaut Gagarin, i.e., a photo of him and three different Russian stamps dedicated to the cosmonaut. The film points to how the Gagarin references are suited to foreshadow how Garmann and Johanna imagine that the metal thrash they find in the woods is a space capsule. The students also highlight the function of other elements in the imprint page, such as the small children's drawing of a girl combined with drawings of the letter "J" and a heart, which foreshadow the penultimate double spread with an image of Garmann and Johanna kissing each other. The film also makes a few comments on the back cover, specifically pointing to an image of a small bird, a chickadee, sitting on a branch with green leaves, a visual detail which relates to the wood scenes inside the book. In conclusion, the film's presentation of the paratexts proves to be multifaceted and demonstrates an interest in the function of visual elements. The presentation combines the modes of showing and telling in ways that heighten the informational quality.

In the next clip the film stops at double spread 12, showing a dreamlike scene of Garmann and Johanna floating around in outer space. Using this scene as an example, the students reflect on why the book may challenge the child reader's skills of interpretation, especially when it comes to how fantasy and reality is blended. The students also point to other dichotomies being questioned in this book. The conversations between Garmann and Johanna in the woods include scientific as well as philosophical and religious aspects, thus the borders between these fields are challenged. Another example is the book's exploring of likeness and difference, in particular related to the identical twins Hannah and Johanna. Finally, the students point to how photos and drawings appear to blend into one another, leaving the viewer uncertain about which is which.

The next part of the film starts by presenting the book's first three double spreads, which include scenes from the schoolyard. The film shows how the opening spread presents a close-up portrait of a girl looking directly at the reader. Behind her, several pairs of anonymous children's feet can be seen

and combined with a visual background consisting of lined paper, like in a schoolbook. The illustration gives an impression of a schoolyard scene, the commentator states. The girl has a rather distorted open mouth, indicating that she sends a mocking message to someone, and the voice-over explains how the verbal text supports this impression by saying that the girl named Hannah teases Garmann about kissing her sister Johanna. Thus, the combined words and image let the readers understand that Hannah appears as rather dominant, the voice-over states. The film also comments on the symmetrical or supportive relation between the verbal text and the illustration in this spread.

Continuing this analysis, the students dwell at the school-yard scene in double spread 2, which in contrast to the close-up in spread 1, opens as a panoramic view of the various school yard activities. Then a slow zooming-in focuses on a small figure almost hidden behind a tree, who turns out to be Garmann. By this cinematic move, the students cleverly mimic how the readers' eyes are guided by the text towards Garmann: "Hannah's horrible, Garmann thinks, moving away. He has seen how things work on the playground; he knows that children form a circle around you and shout and jeer. You have to get away before you're left standing in the middle." For the rest of the break, he stays hidden in the shadow of the tree and watches Hannah and Johanna jump rope." (double spread 2).



**Figure 8.** *Garmanns hemmelighet* by Stian Hole, Cappelen Damm (double spread 3).

In double spread 2, the reader can spot Garmann's back, but the two girls he is looking at are hidden behind the tree, not visible to the reader. The students point to the page turning effect, as double spread 3 (see figure 8) shows a close-up of Garmann behind the tree, allowing the reader to see Hannah and Johanna jumping rope on the other side of the tree. Here, the students point to the similarities and differences in how Hole presents the twin-sisters. "The twins are identical and yet

different, Garmann thinks” (double spread 3). The student comments on how the differences are depicted, by showing one of the sisters with a long-sleeved shirt and naked feet, while the other has shoes, jeans, and short sleeves. Even the arrangement of the ponytails expresses the difference between them, the commentator says.

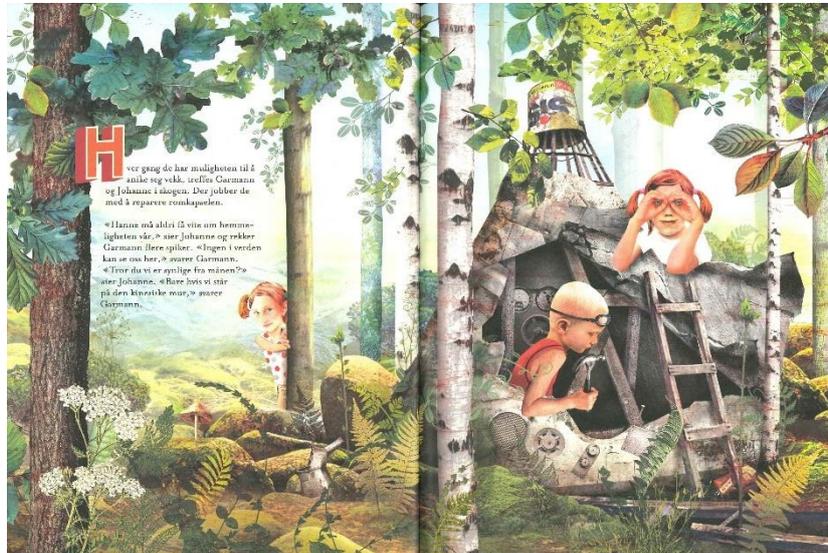


Figure 9. *Garmanns hemmelighet* by Stian Hole, Cappelen Damm (double spread 14).

After analyzing the presentation of the main characters, the student takes us through the story by highlighting the secret place in the woods, showing glimpses of scenes where Garmann and Johanna explore the landscape, play, dream, talk, swim, touch each other and kiss (see figure 9). While continuing to show examples from the book-spreads, the students move from analyzing to discussing certain theoretical issues, such as aesthetic versus efferent reading in the classroom, the complexity of the story and the mixture of symmetrical, complementary and expanding iconotexts. By using several literary theoretic angles chosen from the course syllabus, they address the theme of social exclusion, the readers' horizon of understanding, and how *Garmann's secret* can be viewed as “an open text” due to the manifold options of interpretation.

In the final two minutes of the film, we see and hear children in a school yard, shown from a birds-eye-view, accompanied by a voice-over reflecting upon literature didactics: “Who are the children in our classrooms? How do we consider their age, cultural background, life experiences, language, and reading skills when planning and conducting literary conversations?” The voice-over underlines the need to involve children's own understanding and experience in book talks. She recommends reading this book in a smaller group of pupils to allow more room for interaction with the text and illustrations.

The final scene can be interpreted as cinematic counterpart to Hole's schoolyard collage. Thus, the film starts and ends with the students mimicking Hole's visual universe.

## 8. Individual self-assessments

After having submitted their films, the students were asked to write an individual text of 1-2 pages reflecting upon what kind of knowledge, both in the field of picturebooks and in digital competencies, they found especially interesting or useful. They were also asked to reflect upon the collaboration within the group.

The three students behind the film *Snill* all say they have learned a lot about picturebooks and book talks through this assignment. One of them says she used to think that the verbal text was most important when reading picturebooks aloud in her class, sometimes not allowing all the pupils to see the illustrations. She further describes how she, through the filmmaking project, has come to prepare herself in a different way when presenting a new picturebook to her class. Before she attended this course, her pupils were guided to discuss the theme as presented primarily in the text, she says, but now she will guide them to analyze the iconotext. Another student also accentuates how she has become aware of using music along with the picturebook after having discovered that the text in "Roar" by Katy Perry corresponded so well with *Snill*.

### **The three students behind the film *Snill* all say they have learned a lot about picturebooks and book talks through this assignment.**

One student says she was both excited and skeptical towards working in a small group to complete such a major task. Also, the use of digital tools and forms of communication was scary at first. Not long after, they agreed to read the picturebook in their separate classes and to conduct book talks with their pupils. Then they met to share their classroom experiences

and to discuss what aspects to bring into the film. They used Messenger for communication, Google Disc for sharing documents and co-writing, and iMovie for film-editing. As these three students lived relatively close to one another, they agreed to meet to edit the film jointly, and thus, being able to solve the digital challenges together.

This group asked us to consider adjusting the assignment by prolonging the ten minutes time limit of the film. The tight limits made them leave out quite a lot of material, especially clips from using the book in the classroom, discussing the upbringing of girls and boys today and "in the old days." They also comment that the technical quality of the film footage was not as good as they had wanted due to limits of the size of the file.

Finally, all three students say they value the assignment highly. They appreciate the opportunity to obtain digital competencies in a supportive environment. One of them puts it this way: “Sharing and uploading these films has also been new and educational for me. It took a lot of practice to master the app, but it was fun. You learn fast when something is fun, and you need it!” They did not know any of the other students when the work started, and they described the social aspect of working in a group as important for their motivation to work with the film project.

The four students who made the film about *Garmann’s secret* also express themselves positively about the assignment. Most of them had some knowledge about picturebooks when they started. One student describes how she used picturebooks with her pupils for coziness, working with reading strategies or “spicing up” a subject in natural science, but how her new insights have broadened her view of what books to present to her classes and how to manage book talks. She describes how she is looking forward to using all the picturebooks from the course syllabus. Another student describes how she gained interest to the point that she is now reading book reviews.

The group members first established contact via Facebook and Messenger and shared a Google disk for collaborating with the manuscript. They chose to edit the film in iMovie. One of the students had preliminary knowledge of iMovie so she undertook all editing.

The three students who were not directly involved in editing say that they were given a course from the fourth student, and they are all eager to use this tool for making their own tutorial films and letting the pupils try to make films themselves. One student says that working with this group assignment gave her confidence to try new digital tools on her own. Another one puts it this way: “This has been a bit scary and a demanding workload, but I would not have missed it. I'm surprised at how much I've learned from this, and how harmless it turned out to be.”

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The 7 self-assessing texts we have chosen for this project appear to be representative for what the rest of the 55 students expressed. All say they will use picturebooks and book talks more often, and that they already have discussed with their colleagues some of the great benefits working with picturebooks may have. The impression is that working with this assignment gave the students a higher academic confidence in the field of children’s literature.

We offered no training in digital filmmaking and made no demands concerning what programs to use. A few of the 55 students expressed frustration about the challenge to explore digital filmmaking on their own. Some students say that the final editing was done by the one in their group who already knew how to edit and had access to the equipment needed. Still, they say this assignment made them

less scared of exploring digital tools alone or together with their pupils. Some say that sending files, films, photos, and texts back and forth by e-mails soon was replaced with collaborating on a platform where sharing files was easy. They emphasize how these new digital skills will be of great value in their work. Although the technical side of the film making process led to some frustration, most of the students expressed great joy and pride in how their exploring of technical possibilities helped them to develop their ability to make this film, opening the possibility of making more tutorial films in the future.

## 9. Discussion of findings

As pointed to in the analyses, both films present and discuss the interplay between words and images in ways that demonstrate solid knowledge of picturebook theory. The students discuss verbal and visual aesthetics in observant and multifaceted ways, and they connect their observations wisely to characterizations of main characters and to thematic issues. Both films convey an awareness of the equal role of words and images and demonstrate insights into various types of visual and verbal interactions.

Also, didactic issues are addressed in the films, although more thoroughly in the *Garmann's secret* film than in the film about *What a girl!*. In the self-assessments, the students expand largely on their didactic engagement. The overall impression is that the film making project has made the students aware of new and more diverse ways of working with picturebooks in their classrooms.

Another main issue in our findings relates to how the two films apply the film medium's multimodal affordances in creative ways. The film about *What a girl!* emphasizes particularly the potential of various musical elements, while the other film to a greater extent applies various visual modes of presentation. The students' willingness to explore the use of digital tools is a vital premise for the multimodal qualities of the films. Statements from the self-assessments support the impression of the students' engagement in exploring multimodal resources and digital tools.

According to findings in both the films and the self-assessments, the process of working together in groups allowed for a high degree of student agency and independence. The students expressed that they appreciated the chance to solve problems and make inquiries within the group fellowship. These findings align well with how multimodal and digital learning design theories accentuate the values of collaborative learning contexts (Jewitt, 2006, 2013; Kress & Selander, 2011; Selander, 2015) and furthermore with the principles of dialogic teaching and learning as described by Alexander (2017). Moreover, since the participants in the film making project are experienced teachers, their comments

on the benefits of working in groups correspond to Alexander's focus on dialogic teaching and learning as a tool to foster lifelong learning.

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## 10. Concluding remarks

One aim of this article has been to investigate how students in children's literature courses may expand their knowledge about picturebooks and picturebook didactics by making tutorial films in student-lead groups. Another aim has been to study the students' use of various multimodal sources and digital technologies and to gain insight in their experiences from exploring these tools. Though this study involves in-service teachers, the film making project should be relevant to other groups of students and may also include topics other than picturebooks. The analyses indicate that this kind of film making project may foster a high degree of student engagement suited to achieve in-depth knowledge on topics within the field of children's literature.

## 11. Acknowledgements

All images and citations from the picturebooks are reproduced with permission from the authors, illustrators, and the publishing house.

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