

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE BEYOND PLACE AND SPACE

Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature. Edited by Anna Kérchy and Björn Sundmark. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020. Pp. xv + 337. ISBN 978-3-030-52526-2. €114.39.

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Translation and transmediation, i.e. storytelling through media, are culturally significant, interrelated practices that make room for their audiences from different cultures, social backgrounds, and generations to gain access to one another. According to the editors, one could not be without the other: as forms of storytelling, both translation and transmediation involve the adaptation of a source material to different linguistic and sociocultural environments through different literary and multimedia platforms. Children's literature as a means of connecting the young to the old and *vice versa*, of making cross-cultural commentaries on contemporary social and political issues—Jan Svankmajer's filmic adaptation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice* is a fine example for it—and of creating hyperreal spaces where imagination can freely move, is open to reinterpretation, and thereby is a great source for translation and transmediation.

Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature, edited by Anna Kérchy and Björn Sundmark, provides some thought-provoking insights into how these two concepts are applied in children's and young adults' books, to the constant transformations we need to face the growing digitalization of classical works and the changing readerly needs and expectations of the coming generations. Emphasis should be placed here on concepts like transfer and adaptability, i.e. the (im)possibilities of mediating children's stories between cultural and linguistic borders, an issue that each of the studies of this volume explores.

Structurally, the book consists of five parts, each of which provides colourful perspectives on the issues of translation and transmediation in children's literature. The first part examines the ways mediation through translation can open cultural borders and allows the perceptions of different worlds. Clémentine Beauvais draws an incredibly important picture of the role of children's literature during the cultural and political crisis that Brexit has brought forth. Employing Francois Jullien's concept of the *écart*, i.e. the "sidestep," a *vis-à-vis* between cultures that is needed for a reflection of other cultures, Beauvais discusses how the translation of children's literature can guide the reader out of the pitfalls of his/her ideologically justified prejudices, opening

his/her eyes to other worlds. Hannah Felce discusses the intracultural alterations of Selina Chönz's *Uorsin*, a children's book celebrated as a Swiss national classic, and its sequels. An interesting fact is that while the original tale was written in Ladin, one of the dialects of Romansh, Switzerland's fourth national language, its follow-ups were printed in German, which might inevitably call to mind the issues of cultural, linguistic and aesthetic prioritising both in relation to the source material over its secondary translations and also of the text over its illustrations. In the next chapter, Joanna Dybiec-Gajer examines how the subsequent Polish translations of Hoffmann's tale have altered the context, the style and even the narratorial voice of the original, as well as the way these alterations have influenced the relation of a presumed child-reader to the narrator of the source text. According to the author, the question that each mediator had to face was how to make the apparently detached narrative voice and the basically absurd source material accessible for readers. Dafna Zur scrutinises the aftermath of the Korean war that implied the reassertion of North Korean nationalism and the inclusion of socialist moral vision to North Korean children's literature in science fiction and travel writing. Zur argues that while North Korean writers were struggling to reconstruct their national identity upon the ruins of the war, they had to negotiate it in the shadow of the changing political atmosphere and particularly under the Soviet influence.

The second part analyses the formulas for the complex and varied relations of the visual representation and the translated text. Anees Barai discusses Joyce's only known children's story, *The Cat and the Devil*, originally conceived as a trilingual letter written for his grandson in 1936. Barai maps out the ways Joyce uses the French folklore and language and incorporates it into the linguistic and cultural attributes of Irish identity, and explains how the French translations sought to domesticize Joyce's text, and how the various illustrations of the translated versions adapted the verbal to the visual. Björn Sundmark's essay explores the Swedish translation and visual representation of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Discussing the illustrations accompanying the 1962 Swedish edition of *The Hobbit* by Tove Jansson, Sundmark calls for a reassessment of the visual standards and potentialities of Tolkien's work. Anna Kérchy examines the iconotextual both in the text and the reader's consciousness, i.e. the way our consciousness strives for gaining meaning out of nonsense. As the author claims, this process of our meaning-making highly depends on the relation of text to the image, in this case the poem and its illustration, and the way the original text arrives to us in its domesticated forms through the different translations.

The third part sheds light upon the translatability of images to other images while considering the limits of visual representation. It altogether challenges the hierarchical order between the verbal and visual while discussing the various

forms of visual narratives and the intersections between image and language. In a case study based on research on sixty-eight children's and young adults' books published by Greek publishers, Petros Panaou and Tasoula Tsilimeni compare book covers with those of their translated versions. Their work is essential since it informs us not just about what a significant influence foreign literature had upon Greek writers, but also it gives us a picture of how meaning transformed and was changed through the various additions, omissions and replacements of cover designs, illustrations and peritexts. Karolina Rybicka focuses on Olga Siemaszko's domestication of John Tenniel's illustrations to the original *Alice in Wonderland* to the Polish translation of the book. Rybicka argues that Siemaszko's work is unique in the sense that she highly relied on Tenniel's design, translating it into her four versions of *Alice*, manifesting how adaptable the Tennielian visual world is to the artistic vision of a different culture.

The fourth part explains how the digitalization of classical children's literature and young adults' novels moulds and influences the young audience's readerly expectations and experiences. Cheryl Crowdy first takes note of the growing concerns about how new digital media platforms paralyse Generation Z and Alpha's ability for attention and empathy and how they might replace serious and empathic reading with lightweight and morally indifferent entertainment. With her reader-response methodology, the author engages in a dialogue with these assumptions while mapping out the therapeutic mechanisms of "resisting reading", i.e. the way their different interpretations can help child readers express their emotions, thereby coming to terms with their potential traumas. Furthermore, Crowdy suggests that works like *Chopsticks* prove the fears of the older generation about younger ones as irrelevant and encourage a dialogical intergenerational reading. In the next chapter, Dana Cocargeanu analyses the emerging popularity of Beatrix Potter's tales in post-Communist Romania and the resulting online translations of them carried out by enthusiastic fans based on the growing number of internet users and the unprecedented popularity of Potter's books among Romanian readers. Cybelle Saffa Soares and Domingos Soares address ethical issues regarding the contemporary translations of the Star Wars franchise, mainly concentrating upon the different translations of *light* and *dark* on several transmedia platforms, which ultimately calls to mind the collective expectation of cultural products to serve as a moral fable for children.

The volume's fourth part investigates cross-cultural reading, visualising and transmediating practices by different generations. Annalisa Sezzi investigates the complex multifocal relation between the translator and the adult reading aloud, discussing the Italian translations of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. Agnes Blümer discusses the loss of ambiguity through translation, using the concepts

of “visual context adaptation”, i.e. visual shifts that make originally ambiguous texts more conventional, and “generic affiliation”, i.e. verbal shifts, whereby the fantasy texts were adapted to the generic models founded in post-war West Germany. Carl F. Miller examines contemporary Latin translations of children’s literature, which might be at first surprising, but his claim that conversation between a living and a dead language can transform established narratives in education and thereby inspire young readers to initiate social transformation without the trappings of formal schooling is highly impressive. In the book’s last chapter, Caisey Gailey focuses on three board books that translate and transfer scientific knowledge for toddlers. In this study, Gailey debates whether scientific knowledge can be cognitively acquired at an early age, while paying tribute to these books for their aim to draw children’s attention to science through transmediation.

As we might see, the volume’s spectrum is wide and colourful, drawing the attention to its subject from as many angles as possible. The different chapters suggest that translation and transmediation provide an opportunity to examine cross-cultural and intergenerational aspects, which may help to reveal sociocultural issues present in literature in general and more specifically children’s literature in this case. In this respect, this volume is a brilliant contribution to several further research areas, such as intercultural studies, gender studies, or media studies.