

Anna Kérchy and Björn Sundmark (eds.), 2020.
Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature
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Bálint Szántó
University of Szeged, Hungary

Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature, edited by Anna Kérchy and Björn Sundmark, is a collection of essays which aims to examine the translation and transmediation practices present in children's literature from a wide variety of perspectives. In the introductory chapter of the book, the editors present a novel approach towards children's literature. They compare translation and transmedia storytelling as related practices, pointing out how they both involve the transition of a text between semiotic systems. Transmedia storytelling, which involves telling a story across different platforms of media, is a widespread practice in the entertainment industry. The editors argue that due to the digital turn in the twenty-first century, newer generations come with higher levels of multimedia literacy. They are willing to trace the different multimedia entries containing parts of a certain narrative. Using these building blocks, new meanings and reinterpretations are created. In a similar vein, translation can also alter fundamental elements of a narrative. Children's literature is a genre in which imagination plays an essential role; no wonder it is heavily affected by these changes. The sixteen essays in this collection, divided into five sections, aim to delve into this phenomenon from a great range of viewpoints.

The first section of the book, "Inter-/Intra-Cultural Transformations" begins with an essay written by Clémentine Beauvais. This essay deals with the issue of *difference* as a concept that separates British and European children through literature. This issue is particularly relevant due to the recent departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union. She argues that the low amount of translated children's literature in comparison to other European countries has been a major contributing factor to the establishment and perseverance of this *difference*. Moreover, the lack of emphasis on language learning in the United Kingdom has further contributed to this issue. Beauvais suggests François Julien's *écart* as a theoretical framework that is capable of giving a proper analysis of the role of children's literature in these cultural differences. The *écart* is a gap that serves as a common ground between cultures.

In the second essay, Hannah Felce discusses *Uorsin*, a Swiss children's picturebook written in Romansh language. She argues that the process of translation is more complex than just the movement of a text from a language to another one. In the context of minority language picturebooks, where translation is present even in the creation of the original text, she aims to challenge the binary nature of translation.

In the third chapter, Joanna Dybiec-Gajer analyzes Polish editions of *Struwwelpeter*, a German children's picturebook by Heinrich Hoffmann. Her analysis is mainly concerned with the attitude of the narrator of the text, and how it changes from a neutral stance in the original to a moralizing one in the Polish versions. Even in the most recent rewriting of *Struwwelpeter*, released with completely new illustrations, the didactic tone of the previous Polish editions is still present. This once again shows how translation is more than just a word-by-word transfer of a text between languages. The translated version is also accommodated to the target culture.

In the fourth and final chapter of the first section, Dafna Zur analyzes the role of Soviet influence in post-war North Korean children's literature. She argues that the appearance of travel writing and science fiction in the 1950s is a good indicator of this influence. Travel literature focused heavily on the Soviet Union, as it was viewed as a model for North Korea. Science fiction represented the socialist bloc's fascination with science and control over nature.

The title of the second section of the book is "Image-Textual Interactions." In the first essay of this section, Aneesh Barai discusses the issues of foreignization and domestication in the translated and illustrated versions of James Joyce's *The Cat and The Devil*. At the beginning of the essay, he defines the aforementioned terms. According to Barai, the case of *The Cat and The Devil* is a particularly interesting one, because Joyce wrote this story based on a local legend of a French town. However, he changed many details to conform to Irish child readers. Yet, Joyce retained the use of the French language at certain parts, most notably during the devil's speech. This became a challenge for French translators, who wanted to translate Joyce's text back into the language of the original legend. The illustrated French versions of the story all had their own unique takes on it. The first one went a more symbolic route by illustrating the Devil with Joyce's face and showing the mayor as the faceless representative of bureaucracy. The second illustrated version used medieval Catholic aesthetics, which is identified as the common ground between French and Irish culture. Barai draws several

conclusions at the end of the essay: he identifies cats and letters as cross-cultural bridges. He looks at the town of Beaugency (the setting of the original tale) as the critical reflection of Dublin. He also concludes that *The Cat and The Devil* acts as a “bridge” between generations by combining children’s literature with modernist aesthetics. This allows child readers to develop familiarity with modernism. Lastly, he labels the two aforementioned French illustrated versions as a middle ground between domestication and foreignization.

Björn Sundmark’s chapter on *The Hobbit* gives an intriguing insight into the Swedish editions of Tolkien’s famous tale. In the introduction, he argues that Tolkien’s works are prime examples of transmedia storytelling. Beyond Tolkien’s novels and short stories, his characters had been involved in radio plays, calendars, songs, and illustrations even before Peter Jackson’s film adaptations. All these additions to the original text were acknowledged as part of the complete narrative. In this chapter, Sundmark calls for the recognition of translation and illustration as integral forces of transmedia storytelling. This essay is highly relevant, because we tend to look at the characters and settings in Jackson’s films as the definitive visualizations of Tolkien’s novels, forgetting more than five decades of additional material that had been released before. Moreover, versions of the original text and other transmedial products published in other languages have further impacted the way societies interacted with Tolkien’s works. Sundmark’s intention is to look at these lesser-known releases and consider them part of the canonical transmedia narrative. For example, publishers of earlier editions of *The Hobbit* did not really know the exact target audience of the novel. The illustrations of different versions ranged from childish to horroristic, each signifying a different implied reader.

In the next chapter, Anna Kérchy inspects the (im)possibilities of translating literary nonsense. She aims to regard the interaction between verbal narrative and its illustrations and translations as transmedia storytelling. Firstly, she gives an overview of the different academic approaches to literary nonsense. Then, she goes on to analyze Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky” poem, which is one of the most famous works of this genre. According to Kérchy, translators of nonsense poems have to overcome many challenges: balancing the different layers of signification, accommodating to target audiences, staying faithful to the original text, and implementing the nonsensical effect into another culture. Due to the excessive use of made-up words, the implied reader of “Jabberwocky” is already expected to act as a translator or even as a co-author in order to decode the

meanings behind the gibberish language. In this situation, the illustration of the poem can be considered something that acts as a translation. This ties back to the premise drawn up in the introductory chapter of the book, and adds further evidence to the hypothesis that aims to present translation and transmediation as interconnected practices. The creators of the illustration translate and simultaneously transmediate the poem. Visual additions give child readers assistance in decoding the text.

The next chapter, which is the first chapter in the “Metapictorial Potentialities” section of the book, discusses the translation of peritextual elements in children’s literature. The authors, Petros Pananou and Tasoula Tsilimeni, argue that translated children literature has a huge cultural significance in Greek culture. Yet, it is not a widely researched topic. Therefore, they aim to contribute to the development of translation studies with this chapter. They focus on the paratextual elements of children literature, which include all kinds of textual and visual elements of a book that are not part of the main body of work. These can involve everything from book covers and title pages to reviews and advertisements. The authors of this essay put particular emphasis on covers. On one hand, book covers have a huge influence on the reader’s reception of a “foreign” text, they argue. On the other hand, they also serve as a mediator between different worlds, whether we are talking about foreign linguistic landscapes or the real and the fictional worlds. The authors use the MEAI (Multimodal Ensemble Analytical Instrument) method to perform a critical analysis of translated children’s book covers. Their methodology covers many aspects of the cover illustrations in question, and is capable of giving a thorough view of its textual and visual elements. They draw several conclusions from this analysis. They point out that Greek publishers tend to prefer cover illustrations that depict young people. Darker and “scarier” cover art is often avoided, which suggests the construction of a stereotypical child-like implied reader. The authors acknowledge the fact that the implied reader of a translation can never be identical to the implied reader of the source text, but are more in favour of the foreignization of the concept. This would allow Greek children to experience other cultures through translated literature.

Moving on to the “Digital Media Transitions” section of the book, Cheryl Cowdy gives an analysis of Jessica Anthony’s and Rodrigo Corral’s transmedia novel, *Chopsticks*. It is a novel that is compatible with the changing reading practices of the digital age. It contains very little text, and the story is told with the use of illustrations. The publisher of *Chopsticks* has also developed a smartphone

application that adds even more audiovisual content to the story, making it a complex transmedia experience. Cowdy argues that the spread of transmedia storytelling will not lead to the disappearance of the book format; it will preserve it.

In the second essay of this section, Dana Cocargeanu analyzes the Romanian translations of Beatrix Potter's tales. She starts the essay by discussing the different academic approaches towards the analysis of digital technology in children's literature. She argues that online translations of books are generally under-researched, even though they would provide a good basis for research. They are particularly interesting because they involve both translation and transmediation. Cocargeanu aims to add contribution to the research of double mediation in children's literature. Combining the tools of children's literature studies, translation studies, and literary studies, she investigates the impact of transmediation on Potter's stories. Due to the interdependence of the text itself and paratextual elements in Potter's works, transmediation has had a significant impact on them. Cocargeanu concludes that the internet played an essential role in the popularization and public perception of Potter's works in Romania. Furthermore, the new layer of mediation alters the reading experience of the source text.

In the third and final essay of the section, Domingos Soares and Cybelle Safa Soares discuss the Brazilian translations of transmedial *Star Wars* narratives. Their main focus is on the duality of light and dark, and how this duality appears in these translations. Using definitions created by Henry Jenkins, they analyze a wide variety of different *Star Wars* media, including games and animated series. They argue that the translation of a transmedial entry can influence how its consumers perceive the light-dark dichotomy. It can further emphasize the "goodness" and "evilness" of certain characters, but at the same time, it can also blur these lines. The authors conclude that since transmedia narratives require active participation from viewers and readers, engagement with these narratives eventually leads to the reworking of the relations within them. Translation is a crucial factor in how these relations are reconstructed. This essay is highly relevant, because it acknowledges media entries beyond the original (the films, in the case of *Star Wars*), and treats them as equal elements of one grand narrative. Due to changing behaviors in media consumption, it is particularly important to research these other transmedial entries properly, and this essay succeeds at that.

The final section of the book is called "Intergenerational Transmissions." This section focuses on the effect of children's literature on different age groups. It begins with Annalissa Sezzi's analysis of the Italian translation of *Where the*

Wild Things Are. Sezzi inspects the different voices present in these translations: the textual and contextual. She argues that when a story comes to life through an adult's voice who is reading it aloud, the narrative becomes re-interpreted and transmediated. In the next essay, Agnes Blümer examines dual address in children's literature in the post-World War Two period. She focuses on fantasy novels that carry crossover appeal, and looks for signs of ambiguity that can make adult readers interpret the text differently than children.

In the third essay of this section, Carl F. Miller discusses the Latin translations of children's literature. Although it might seem contradictory at first, considering how Latin is a dead language, he argues that Latin translations of children's literature can greatly contribute to the "revitalization" of the language. In the final essay of the section and the book itself, Casey D. Gailey delves into the world of scientific educational books for children. The books she analyzes are different from regular children's science books, because they discuss advanced topics such as quantum physics. She raises the question whether these books are really aimed at children, or if they are actually humorous parodies of scientific literature. However, she comes to the conclusion that these books are indeed meant for child audiences, aiming to raise their interest towards science.

The significance and novelty of this collection lies in several factors. Its authors take an important step by acknowledging the increasing influence of digital culture in children's literature. In an era where the connection between author and reader is no longer a predominantly unidirectional relationship, it is crucial to understand the processes in which we engage with these texts. With the rise of social media, we are exposed to considerably more information than previous generations, which changes our attitude towards media consumption drastically. No wonder that children's literature is also affected by this, and publishers are more and more willing to accommodate to this new situation. This collection of essays is a valuable contribution to the scientific discourse about translation and new media from the perspective of children's literature, and gives a profound view of the aforementioned topic in a broad scope. By looking at translation and transmediation as interrelated practices, the authors provide an addition to an emerging field of research. The essays complement each other and work towards the common goal from a great range of angles.

Several questions that can arise from a reading of this collaborative effort. If we consider translation and transmediation complementary processes, how does adaptation fit into the picture? How can we look at the canonicity of the

different entries in a transmedia narrative from the perspective of the methodology utilized in this collection? There are many possible paths that can be taken for further research, and this book succeeds at providing threads for new discourses.