

Endless Change

Sylvie Geerts & Sara Van den Bossche, eds. 2014. *Never-Ending Stories: Adaptation, Canonisation, and Ideology in Children's Literature*. Ghent: Academia Press. 254 pp. ISBN 978-90-382-2254-7

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Adaptations and rewritings of children's literature are often determined by the prevalent ideology and attitudes in a particular society. Numerous scholars have supported this assertion, such as Zohar Shavit in *Poetics of Children's Literature* (1986), Göte Klingberg in *Children's Fiction in the Hands of the Translators* (1986) and Nike Kocijančić Pokorn in *Post-Socialist Translation Practices* (2012). Stories are adapted to fit the needs of readers in different contexts, and translators have the power to decide what should be adapted and for what purpose. Taking a broad view of adaptation in the specific field of children's literature, the volume under review tackles a variety of adaptation processes, such as transmediality, the orientation of adaptations towards the ideology associated with the pre-text, reverse adaptation, etc. The volume covers a variety of topics, ranging from fairy tale and story adaptations, through retellings of South African stories and ancient myths, to adaptations of comics.

The volume contains a collection of essays presented at the 2011 “Adaptation of Canonical Texts in Children's Literature” Conference, held at Ghent University and aimed at bridging the gap between adaptation and canonisation studies. The preface is followed by an introductory chapter (both texts are written by the editors), which explains that many stories live on by means of adaptation. However, since stories are frequently adapted so as to correspond with the new context, they are constantly being reshaped in order to live on and suit new readers. Hence the title, inspired by Michael Ende's book *Neverending Story*, shows how adaptation allows canonical texts to develop into never-ending stories. Three fundamental concepts of adaptation – socio-political, socio-cultural and transmedial adaptation – are elaborated in three parts of the volume through a number of case studies.

Part 1, dealing with the socio-political aspects of adaptation, contains three texts which illustrate the engagement of children's literature with social, political and ethical issues. The three case studies show how canonical texts (*Tarzan*, *Shahnameh* and the myth of Prometheus) can be employed to convey outspoken ideological messages. The first text (by Sanna Lehtonen) provides an analysis of a Finnish adaptation of the American classic *Tarzan of the Apes*, which places the main character, now called Tarsa, in the period during and after the war between Finland and Russia, attempting to create a national identity for Finland by constructing a heroic Finnish identity.

The next text (“Adapting the Rebel” by Tahereh Rezaei and Mohsen Hanif) – about reading *Shahnameh* in Tehran – discusses how an original text can be adapted in different ways during a 20-year period to suit three different regimes, with each of the adaptations emphasising different aspects of the work. In the third text, Sylvia Warnecke tackles writing for children in the context of the German Democratic Republic, using the example of an adaptation of the myth of Prometheus, which diverges from its traditional interpretative

patterns. The author describes a publishing programme which was designed to produce retellings which would conform to socialist ideology.

Part 2 contains four texts dealing with the socio-cultural aspects of adaptation. First, Vanessa Joosen analyses early Dutch and English translations of the Grimm brothers' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, concluding that adaptation, although frequently suffering from low status, can enhance the processes of canonisation and thus contribute to the conservation of cultural memory. Lien Fret looks into the different guises the fairy godmother adopts in five Dutch translations of "Cinderella" and explores how translators' interpretations of Perrault's character reflect prominent tendencies in the development of children's literature in Flanders. Jan Van Coillie discusses the Disney film adaptation of H.C. Andersen's "The Little Mermaid", analysing the changes that were made in the process of Disneyfication. Finally, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer looks into the de-canonisation processes in her analysis of E.T.A. Hoffmann's "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King", showing the interconnections between children's and adult literature.

Part 3 of the volume deals with transmedial aspects of adaptation using the examples of four texts. First, Franci Greyling looks at the creation and reception of texts at grassroots level through the genre of the folktale in Namibia and South Africa. Oral stories have been written down in order to become canonised. In this process, the nature of the oral story is inevitably altered, but it secures its position in the canon and helps establish cultural memory. With the rise of new media and technology, a surge in free and innovative modes of adaptation can be observed. Combining different plots from various traditions, and intermingling traditional and popular genres, such adaptations envisage new, more active roles for children as readers of canonical narratives. John Stephens and Sylvie Geerts show how the expanded concept of literature influences practices of adaptation in contemporary children's literature written in Dutch and English. In "Adapting Dramatic Irony in Comics", Joe Sutliff Sanders discusses how the literary technique of dramatic irony requires the reader to take on a more active role by making connections between an adaptation and its pre-text. In a similar way, in "Enchanted Conversations" John Patrick Pazdziora deals with reverse adaptation, exploring how in online journals the contemporary reader of fairy tales can become an author of adaptations. The author analyses three online journals using different approaches to adaptation and retelling of children's fairy tales.

Each text is followed by a bibliography. The volume does not provide a common list of references at the end of the book, nor is there an index of terms.

By introducing a wide-ranging set of case studies, the authors consider the challenges inherent in transforming the stories and characters from one type of text to another. This volume places welcome emphasis on international research of adaptations for children. Transitions from the adult to the children's canon (or vice versa), from one language to another, from page to feature film or animation, from oral to written forms, as well as reverse adaptations of fairy tales, are all examined to show that these new forms are inevitable and that it is necessary to make them acceptable and understandable to new audiences, but also for political and ideological reasons. The editors have succeeded in drawing together an informative series of insights into the transcultural reach of adaptation strategies in children's literature.