

to broader social ideals. The “cute” Pioneer, drawing on kitsch traditions, merges aesthetic appeal with ideological messaging.

The penultimate chapter presents GDR children’s literature as a tool for military education during the Cold War. Picturebooks and photobooks introduced children to the NVA (National People’s Army), Soviet forces, and concepts of national defence, portraying soldiers as friendly, skilled, and heroic. Early military education began in kindergartens, Pioneer camps, and schools, and combined peace rhetoric, comradeship, and fascination with technology. Books like *Kleiner Bruder Staunemann* (1966) and *Panzer vorwärts* (1964) mix narrative, photography, and technical instruction to create positive impressions of soldiering. Factual details of equipment and drills were framed to engage children without revealing war’s brutal realities, and in such a way fostered loyalty, readiness to defend the GDR, and militarised socialist values.

Chapter 12 concludes by examining how East German (GDR) picturebooks reflect and enact literary change, using theoretical frameworks such as Benjamin Gittel’s model of evolving text types. It examines how ideological, social, and aesthetic transformations in the GDR shaped children’s literature from early Socialist Realism focused on reconstruction and education toward later forms emphasising emotion, fantasy, and visual “cuteness”. The author reviews multiple explanatory models of literary change (causal, intentional, functional, teleological, and structural) and argues that none alone suffices but together illuminate how GDR picturebooks balanced political function with artistic development, eventually revealing a softening of ideology and an increasing turn toward emotional and imaginative expression.

Across its twelve chapters, Jörg Meibauer’s book demonstrates how GDR picturebooks embodied the tension between ideological function and artistic experimentation. Through changing styles, subjects, and emotional tones, ranging from Socialist Realism to playful modernism, the works reveal both the state’s pedagogical ambitions and the artists’ capacity for innovation. In recognising picturebooks as vital expressions of visual culture, the study reclaims them as significant contributions to twentieth-century art and education, showing that even under political constraint, they cultivated aesthetic sensitivity and a distinctive socialist modernity.

A Literary Symbiosis That (Strangely) Works

Dana E. Lawrence, Amy L. Montz, eds. 2020. *Adaptation in Young Adult Novels: Critically Engaging Past and Present*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. 246 pp. ISBN 978-150-136-179-1

Vilda Kiaunytė

Is classical literature still relevant? Should Shakespeare’s works continue to be taught in educational institutions? *Adaptation in Young Adult Novels: Critically Engaging Past and Present* offers thought-provoking answers to these pressing questions. Across fifteen chapters, the contributors argue that while classical literature remains significant, greater critical attention should be directed toward adaptations of canonical works. Such adaptations

can offer fresh perspectives on familiar stories, reframe characters' experiences, and, in some cases, provide narrative justice to previously marginalised figures.

The introductory chapter, "Both Flesh and Monument: The Immortal Life of Literature through Adaptation", written by editors Dana E. Lawrence and Amy L. Montz, effectively articulates the book's purpose. The editors acknowledge the reluctance of readers who revere classical literature to accept adaptations, especially when the original texts are regarded as untouchable cultural artifacts. However, they argue that adaptation does not diminish the value of the source material, but rather reaffirms its continuing relevance. As an example, they discuss Kim Zarins's *Sometimes We Tell the Truth*, a reimagining of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, in which the adapted characters reflect contemporary issues – foregrounding female agency, LGBTQ+ identities, and modern adolescent struggles. Lawrence and Montz contend that such reinterpretations render canonical works more relatable to young adult audiences, encouraging readers to revisit the originals and engage in comparative analysis that deepens their understanding of both texts.

The book is organised into three sections. The first, "Representation Matters", includes contributions by Fiona Hartley-Kroeger, Indu Ohri, Lisa M. Valenzuela, Dalila Forni, and Saffyre Falkenberg. These essays explore adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Edith Wharton's fiction, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the Cinderella tale, and classical Greek myths. Each author demonstrates how adaptation can renew the relevance of canonical works in contemporary culture. For instance, Hartley-Kroeger observes that modern reimaginings of *Romeo and Juliet* by Melinda Taub and Rachel Caine shift focus from the titular lovers to other characters, such as Rosaline and Benvolio, thereby offering more mature, active, and self-aware perspectives. Valenzuela's discussion of Sara Benincasa's novel *Great* highlights how the adaptation reframes Fitzgerald's narrative through a female lens, centring on identity rather than romance. Forni analyses the queer retellings of the Cinderella story in Malinda Lo's novel *Ash* and Emma Donoghue's short story "The Tale of the Shoe", emphasising their challenges to heteronormative tropes. Falkenberg, meanwhile, demonstrates that Greek mythology continues to provide fertile ground for reworking, as seen in Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, which integrates themes of race, disability, and adolescence while remaining grounded in the mythic tradition.

The second section, "Literature and Popular Culture", features essays by Tara Moore, Melanie A. Marotta, Eileen Totter, and Michelle Anya Anjirbag and Madeleine Hunter. These chapters examine adaptations of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and Disney narratives. Many of the adaptations analysed foreground female agency and reinterpret patriarchal structures within familiar stories. Moore traces how numerous retellings of *Jane Eyre* foreground themes of feminism and equality over romance. Marotta explores Megan Shepherd's *A Cold Legacy* from the *Madman's Daughter* trilogy, which transforms Shelley's patriarchal context by positioning its female scientist protagonist as autonomous and self-sufficient. Totter's analysis of Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* reveals how the adaptation introduces racial diversity and gender discourse to Austen's text. Finally, Anjirbag and Hunter's discussion of Disney's *Twisted Tales* series underscores how these reimaginings invite readers to reconsider familiar characters through speculative "What if...?" scenarios.

The third section, “Making the Past Present”, includes essays by Amy L. Montz, Brett Carol Young, Maya Zakrzewska-Pim, Dana E. Lawrence, and Madeleine Tulip. These contributions examine how adaptations reconstruct the spatial, historical, and gendered dimensions of classical texts. Montz’s analysis of Katherine Howe’s *The Appearance of Annie Van Sinderen* shows how adaptations can reimagine not only characters but also space – inviting young adult readers to navigate both contemporary and historical versions of New York City. Similarly, Lawrence’s study of Suzanne Selfors’s *Saving Juliet* suggests that Shakespeare’s Verona functions as a mutable cultural space, redefined by the experiences of modern visitors and readers. Zakrzewska-Pim’s essay on Sarah Rees Brennan’s *Tell the Wind and Fire* demonstrates how adaptations of Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* help younger readers grasp the historical constraints placed upon women, while exploring themes of femininity, consent, and belonging. Collectively, these essays reaffirm that while adaptation can modernise classical texts, it also exposes unresolved social and gender issues that persist across time.

Overall, *Adaptation in Young Adult Novels* is a valuable and timely contribution to adaptation studies. Its essays are rigorously researched and pedagogically relevant, making the volume particularly useful for educators seeking to bridge the gap between canonical literature and contemporary young adult culture. Yet, the collection’s accessible style ensures that general readers can also appreciate its insights. As the editors suggest, young adults may find that modern adaptations not only recontextualise classical works but also reveal new dimensions of meaning – offering the pleasure of rediscovery rather than confusion or alienation.