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*Never-ending Stories: Adaptation, Canonisation and Ideology
in Children's Literature* ed. by Sylvie Geerts and Sara Van
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Toin Duijx, Sanne Parlevliet

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Books on Books

Compiled and edited by Jutta Reusch and Christiane Raabe

CHRISTIANE RAABE is the director and **JUTTA REUSCH** is the head of the library services of the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany.

NEVER-ENDING STORIES: ADAPTATION, CANONISATION AND IDEOLOGY IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE. Ed. by Sylvie Geerts and Sara Van den Bossche. Ghent: Academia Press, 2014. 254 pages. ISBN: 978-90-382-2254-7

The Inter-relationship of Adaptation and Canonization

For years, adaptations have been at the center of attention within children's literature studies, which is why it was a risky decision to devote yet another symposium and book to the topic.

Tarzan, Cinderella, who has not heard of them? Their narratives belong to the canon of (children's) literature, but in many cases, we are

not familiar with the original stories but rather with strongly simplified retellings of those originals. Even more often, we are only acquainted with them through film adaptations, by means of which these figures have come to belong to our collective cultural heritage. The original stories are still known mainly because they are adapted for new audiences in different times. Hence, Geerts and Van den Bossche argue, canonization and adaptation are inextricably entwined. The canonical status of a text can be a motivation to adapt it, while at the same time adaptations can guarantee that the canonical status of a given text is maintained. As such, they facilitate the creation of "never-ending stories."

In a clear and well-researched introduction, the volume editors distinguish between three ideology-laden components, which determine the process of adaptation: socio-political, socio-cultural, and transmedial aspects. The contributions in the book are organized according to this categorization.

The section on socio-political aspects covers transformations of a text that are explicitly laden with political ideologies. Sanna Lehtonen shows how, in a Finnish adaptation of the *Tarzan* stories, the tension between a discourse highlighting a common national identity and a reality characterized by differences among people is used to present a hierarchy within one's own group. At the same time, she offers a considerable contribution to the theoretical foundation of this area of research. Convincingly, she connects the adaptation of the *Tarzan* stories with Finland's national history as well as with the adapter's personal history. The other two articles in this section are more descriptive. Tahereh Rezaei and Mohsen Hanif demonstrate the interconnection between Iran's tumultuous history and the ideologically charged adaptations of the canonical text *Shahnameh*. Sylvia Warnecke discloses how in the former GDR adaptations of canonical texts were used explicitly to spread the socialist ideology among children.

The section on socio-cultural aspects zooms in on the role of adaptations in the canonization of narratives. Even here, ideology plays a crucial role, as Geerts and Van den Bossche emphasize. This can work in two ways: either because an adaptation subscribes to a dominant ideology or because it contradicts it and finds an audience for that subversion. Vanessa Joosen reveals that the fame the Grimm fairy tales acquired is not entirely self-evident. She proves that the selection of the tales and the adjustments with regard to content and style caused differences in reception. Lien Fret demonstrates how the cultural context in which fairy tales are received can be decisive. She does so by dealing with the different guises Cinderella's fairy godmother has taken on over the course of time. Jan van Coillie compares Andersen's little mermaid with her alter ego in Disney's

movie adaptation and notices three significant shifts: from earnest to entertainment, from tragedy to romance, and from an inner moral conflict with a religious message to an outer conflict with a pedagogical message. Finally, based on an analysis of the reception of E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Nussknacker und Mausekönig* both in German and in international (children's) literature, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer concludes that canonization depends not merely on adaptation but also on the appreciation of literature written for children as a whole.

Section three, covering transmedial aspects, contains contributions that deal with transpositions to different media. By *transmedial aspects*, Geerts and Van den Bossche mean both the aspects involved in adjusting a text to a different medium and the juxtaposition or even postmodern mixing of elements from different traditions in different media. Perhaps the most innovative and stimulating of all the contributions is the one by John Stephens and Sylvie Geerts. They manage to develop a model capable of analyzing works that use old stories to tell an entirely new narrative. Using several convincing examples, they demonstrate that this model truly is applicable in research. Throughout their chapter, they stress the importance of contemporary technical possibilities to quickly locate the source of certain references. The remaining three articles in this section deal with, among other things, the reworking of canonical fairy tales in South-African "grassroots literature," an argumentation in favor of the inclusion of comics and of digital fairy tale journals in adaptation studies. All three contributions have in common that they transgress the domain of children and their reading and return the genres to their adult readers, a process that Pazdziora terms "reverse adaptation."

Adaptation Studies

By organizing the symposium in which children's literature scholars from different countries were given a forum for discussing contemporary adaptation studies and by publishing this volume, Geerts and Van den Bossche contributed to this type of research by providing a kind of "state of the art."

All chapters demonstrate that there is a clear link between adaptation and canonization. Some of the essays contribute significantly to theorizing the topic, as do Geerts and Van den Bossche in their introduction. Simultaneously, the contributions in this volume show that there is plenty left to explore and that these "never-ending stories" indeed will never end.

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JAKTEN PÅ FORTELLINGER. BARNE- OG UNGDOMSLITTERATUR PÅ TVERS AV MEDIER (In the Pursuit of Narratives: Children's and Youth Literature across Media). Ed. by Elise Seip Tønnessen. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2014. 300 pages. ISBN 978-82-15-02384-7

Literary texts today are situated in a complex network of different forms of presentation and production—print editions, e-books, picture-book based apps, and film and game adaptations as well as genuinely digital literature which permanently evolves due to advice and comments from readers. The "new" forms of literature change the ways books are produced and