



An Integrated Approach of Translation and Transmediation Studies in Children's Literature

Kérchy, A., & Sundmark, B. (Eds.). (2020). *Translating and transmediating children's literature*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Abstract:

The review article refers to the book *Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature*, edited by Anna Kérchy and Björn Sundmark (2020), underlining not only the main contents of this volume, but also reflecting on its contribution to increase the research in this field. The author stresses the variety of approaches and perspectives on the subject and the relevance of the contribution from different fields of research, including literary studies, linguistics, translation, education, visual arts, and media studies.

Key words:

Anna Kérchy, Björn Sundmark, children's and young adult culture, hybridity, interdisciplinarity, multimedia, translation, transmediation

Zintegrowane podejście do studiów nad przekładem i transmediacją w literaturze dziecięcej

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Abstrakt:

Artykuł recenzyjny odnosi się do książki *Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature* [Tłumaczenie i transmediacja literatury dziecięcej] pod redakcją Anna Kérchy i Björna Sundmarka (2020). Celem tekstu jest nie tylko wskazanie

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tematyki omawianego tomu, lecz także refleksja nad tym, do jakiego stopnia przyczynia się on do poszerzenia stanu badań w swojej dziedzinie. Autorka podkreśla różnorodność zaprezentowanych w monografii perspektyw badawczych oraz wagę podejścia do tematu poprzez wielorakie dziedziny naukowe, jak np. literaturoznawstwo, językoznawstwo, studia nad przekładem, pedagogika, sztuki wizualne czy medioznawstwo.

Słowa kluczowe:

Anna Kérchy, Björn Sundmark, kultura dziecięca i młodzieżowa, hybrydyczność, interdyscyplinarność, multimedia, przekład, transmediacja

Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature is a collection of essays, edited by Anna Kérchy and Björn Sundmark, and published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2020. The volume was included in the series *Critical Approaches to Children's Literature*, responsible, in the last years, for the publication of relevant contributions and innovative perspectives in the research field of children's literature. By focusing on a wide range of children's texts, including children's literature, films, and multimedia products, this series underlines the sophistication and complexity not only of children's literature, but also of its study and research, combining different theoretical approaches and methodological perspectives. Kérchy and Sundmark are established international scholars, authors and editors of numerous books and articles on children's literature. Recently, they organised a special issue of *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* (2018/1), dedicated to translating and transmediating. Kérchy (2016) is also the author of the volume *Alice in Transmedia Wonderland: Curiouser and Curiouser New Forms of a Children's Classic*, while Sundmark, in addition to the 1999 publication of *Alice's Adventures in the Oral-Literary Continuum*, is also a member of the international project FanTALES – Fanfiction for the Teaching and Application of Languages through E-Stories, which aims at modernising the teaching of literature by addressing the new media literacy of adolescents and by using open tools for interactive storytelling.

The volume under analysis aims to reflect on the close relationship between translation and transmediation by analysing a wide set of examples that include classics of children's literature (such as *Der Struwwelpeter* by Heinrich Hoffmann, 1845, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, 1865, or *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter, 1893), as well as other, less familiar works and contexts, such as those related to the use of translated Soviet science fiction in North Korea (Zur, 2020) or the relevance and purposes of Latin translations of contemporary children's texts (Miller, 2020), just to mention

two examples. Therefore, the volume's authors cover a wide variety of topics in different ways and from various perspectives, dealing with relevant and somehow overlooked questions and cultural practices that involve translation and/or transmediation procedures. The innovation of this volume especially consists in this mixed approach in which translation and transmediation are perceived as complementary and interconnected,¹ due to different levels of adaptation, reinterpretation, and transformation of a source text.

The editors carried out a wide variety of collaborations and projects throughout the years, including some international ones, such as the retranslation from 150 different languages into English of the Mad Tea Party chapter from *Alice's Adventures* – under the editorial supervision of Jon Lindseth and Alan A. Tannenbaum (2015) – as part of the celebration of the sesquicentennial anniversary of the publication of Carroll's classic. The volume *Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature* stands for the vast diversity of the authors included – from various countries and continents, dealing with different, yet complementary, perspectives on the subject, without losing its unity and coherence. It is relevant to underline not only the variety of the – more or less conventional – theoretical and methodological approaches used, but also the attention given to languages, literatures, and cultural contexts which are often forgotten or less known to an international audience, such as the North Korean (Zur, 2020), but also the Brazilian (Soares & Soares, 2020) or the Polish (Dybiec-Gajer, 2020; Rybicka-Tomala, 2020) ones.

The contemporary and relevant nature of the subject of this book derives mainly from the increasing interest in translation and adaptation, resulting from the globalisation phenomenon and the digital transformations it introduced in the literary panorama. But its trendiness also arises from an approach that involves several different participants in the literary process and in the book chain, including the mediating process of translation and transmediation, and the reader/user/'producer' as well. The importance of translation of children's literature is related to its circulation and promotion, to the valorisation and recognition of minority and neglected languages and cultures, and even to issues like interculturality or empathy. The valorisation and recognition of other pertinent elements taking part in the reading process, besides the literary text, are also a common aspect in several chapters, underlining the growing relevance of telling a story by the means of new or distinct formats, media platforms, and languages but also with the use of illustration and

¹ The way that translation frequently involves transmediation and transmediation can be considered a specific form of translation.

peritextual elements. The variety of approaches and perspectives on the subject addressed in this volume expresses not only its research potentials, but also the need of a multidisciplinary study on translation and transmedia procedures and their implications that may incorporate contributions from different fields of research, including literary studies, linguistics, translation, education, visual arts, and media studies, just to name a few.

The relationship between children's literature and other media is wide and involves not only translation and adaptation from one medium to another, but also the use of procedures and techniques from each other in a complex process of interchanges and contaminations. For instance, Markus Kuhn and Johann N. Schmidt (2014) refer the idea of 'analogies' to express the similarities between literary and filmic storytelling. The increasing relevance of adaptations of children's literature to the cinema, but to digital applications or computer and video games too, is also followed by the integration of aspects of other media in children's books, in an increasingly common trend of hybridity of genres, formats, and discourses. Intermedial studies have proved to be more productive when applied to the universe of children's literature, considering its intrinsically multimodal nature, dealing with questions of the relationship between literature and other forms of art, as well as adaptations to other media (Mackey, 2002). The status of the children's literature author itself has also been changing in some cases, given the writers' frequent collaborations in the process of adaptation, to just mention the work of Shaun Tan, Oliver Jeffers, Jannie Baker, or Brian Selznick.

Studies on transmedia narration (Ryan, 2014) are increasingly comprehensive and include a remarkable diversity of phenomena, from the mass media, such as television, radio, and, more recently, the internet, to more traditional artistic forms, such as literature, painting, or music. The concept of 'remediation' (Bolter & Grusin, 2000), which was used to explain the relationships between different media and the constant search to 'remedy' the limitations they present, has been replaced by that of 'intermediality,' which, according to Werner Wolf (2008), can be interpreted in a broad or restricted sense. In the first case, it can be understood as an equivalent form of intertextuality, first applied to the context of arts (interartistic relations) and, later, to the media. In the second case, it refers to the inclusion of more than one medium in each object or production. Wolf (2005) also defines a plethora of concepts to characterise different relationships between the media: 'plurimediality' applies to artistic objects that include various semiotic systems; 'transmediality' characterises narrative phenomena that are not linked to a specific medium; 'intermedial transposition' is used for adaptations from one medium to another; 'intermedial reference' applies to a text dealing with another medium as a theme, alluding to it, quoting it, or imitating it.

In this context, it is also relevant to underline the consequences of the presence and continuous spreading of narrative content across multiple media platforms. Defined as 'transmedia' or 'transmedial' narration, this concept was first coined and described by Henry Jenkins (2006), and it can be considered an important trend in contemporary culture, raising pertinent theoretical and methodological questions regarding its study, namely concerning the specificities of transmedia storytelling. The consequences in the reading process and in the teaching of literature are also an important perspective that deserves attention and the development of more studies, including on the reception or on the reader's response.

The studies included in the volume address these questions and others by considering interdisciplinary approaches to children's literature and culture as a development of a long and well-established line of studies in the field of translation and adaptation, including its more recent digital turn. The volume stands out by the way it explores the connections between translation and transmediation and by the way it applies them to the analysis of children's literature through specific examples and case studies from a wide variety of contexts.

The book is divided into five parts, each one including from two up to four chapters: (1) "Inter-/Intra-Cultural Transformations," (2) "Image-Textual Interactions," (3) "Metapictorial Potentialities," (4) "Digital Media Transitions," and (5) "Intergenerational Transmissions." Nevertheless, some chapters address questions related to other different sections, since they cross several perspectives and the boundaries between subjects are not completely closed. The volume opens with *Introduction* where the editors present not only the contents of the chapters, but also establish the founding ground for this complementary and combined approach towards translation and transmedia as a reciprocal and complementary method – clearly distinctive from previous studies, which mainly focused on issues such as the challenges of translation or the relevance of specific translations of children's books. Therefore, Sundmark and Kérchy (2020) aim to "contribute to the solidification of an emerging new research field by exploring the connections between translation *and* transmediation, covering a broad scope in terms of languages, dialects, and intermedial aspects [emphasis in original]" (p. 8).

The first part, entitled "Inter-/Intra-Cultural Transformations", includes four chapters. It starts with Clémentine Beauvais's (2020) proposal on the specificity of the British context regarding the unfortunate still residual presence of translated children's literature and on the expected benefits of translations in terms of the evolution of children's literature itself and of its market, research, and teaching. Hannah Felce (2020) reflects upon the relationships between the publication of a children's classic, first written in a minority language, and its translations and adaptations into new formats, including picturebooks, destabilising

a traditional distinction between the original text and secondary translations. Combining approaches from translation studies, adaptation studies, children's literature and children's literature translation studies, the author underlines the implications of the existence of different linguistic versions of a literary text and how its illustrations interact during the publishing process. Joanna Dybiec-Gajer (2020) analyses the Polish versions of *Struwwelpeter*, in order to identify the consequences of the changes introduced to the narrator's voice throughout time and to reflect on their implications in terms of the reading experience. This part, dedicated to inter-/intra-cultural transformations, ends with Dafna Zur's (2020) contribution, dedicated to explaining how the translation of Soviet texts into North Korean, during the 1950s, had an impact on the construction of national pride, as well as on education, by transmitting scientific knowledge and socialist values, with an impact on the emergent North Korean children's literature.

The second part – “Image-Textual Interactions” – includes three texts that deal differently with the relationship between words and pictures in the translation of children's literature. It opens with a chapter by Aneesh Barai (2020) who focuses on a James Joyce's story written to his grandson and which was transformed into an illustrated picturebook and translated into several languages. The analysis reflects on the challenges of translation and the role of illustration to reproduce verbal aspects. Björn Sundmark (2020) analyses the translation and visualisation of *The Hobbit* by Tolkien (1937) into Swedish, as well as Tove Jansson's illustrations, in order to portray the aesthetics of fantasy that, in some way, is still relevant in contemporary days. Finally, Anna Kérchy (2020) reflects upon the impossibility of translating nonsense by using a case study from Carroll's “Jabberwocky” and its Hungarian versions, underling the challenges posed by the interaction between verbal text, visual illustration, and oral performance.

The next section is dedicated to “Metapictorial Potentialities” and stresses the relevance of pictures in the translation process and/or multimedia adaptation, as well as in the re-illustration of a story. It includes a chapter by Petros Panaou and Tasoula Tsilimeni (2020) where they present a comparative analysis of source-text book covers and their Greek translations, illustrating the relevance of translated literature in the Greek context and how it influences national production. Karolina Rybicka-Tomala (2020) studies the process of republication and retranslation of children's literature classics, by focusing on the re-illustration process and its influence on the stories' content. By using some examples of the Polish versions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, she also explores the relationship with the Tenniel aesthetics and its adaptations.

The fourth section – “Digital Media Transitions” – compiles three chapters related either to the digital adaptations of texts or to the challenges of

translating a transmedia storyworld franchise. Cheryl Cowdy's (2020) chapter analyses the reader's responses to a multimodal novel available both in a traditional printed edition and in an iPad application, underlining the relevance of shared reading experiences, especially when dealing with traumatic themes. Dana Cocargeanu (2020) studies online translations of Beatrix Potter's stories in Romania, and the reason of these stories and translations' growing success, also establishing some comparison with their corresponding printed translations. Domingo Soares and Cybelle S. Soares (2020) analyse the Brazilian translations of special ethical issues present in the Star Wars transmedia storyworld franchise, analysing the challenges of the translation of transmedia narratives.

The final section is dedicated to "Intergenerational Transmissions," by giving special attention to diverse cross-audiences, including a wide range of readers. Annalisa Sezzi's (2020) chapter compares different Italian translations of *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak (1963), especially in what concerns the different voices heard. Based on a study of translations of American, English, and French crossover fantasy into German, Agnes Blümer (2020) studies the challenges resulting from those translations as well the adaptations made into the dominant models at the time. Carl F. Miller (2020) analyses a very specific kind of translations of children's texts, the ones made into Latin of contemporary and popular literature, reflecting on the purposes, readers, and challenges posed by this particular segment. And finally, using board books aimed at babies and toddlers, Casey D. Gailey (2020) analyses how they translate and promote scientific knowledge, questioning the main purposes of those books as well as their target audience.

The wide panorama of research conducted under the theoretical umbrella of the translation and transmedia studies presented in this volume encourages scholars to further develop their work, putting forward a wide variety of approaches and study possibilities. It also promotes comparative and collaborative studies, by allowing readers to identify similar strategies and procedures in different languages, literatures, cultures, and historical contexts. Furthermore, it opens the possibilities for future research and studies, carried out in this challenging and instigating framework, with multiple applications in different areas, from education to publishing, including artistic creation and translation.

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