

**Veljka Ruzicka Kenfel (Ed). *New Trends in Children's Literature Research --Twenty-first Century Approaches –200-2012. (2014). Spain: Peter Lang Edition. 239 pages.***

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This text incorporates various studies by researchers who belong to the group *Anglo-German Children's Literature and its Translation* at the University of Vigo, first set up in 1992. The main focus is to describe new tendencies within literature for children and young adults, including translation, adaptation, comics, and palindrome.

The first chapter entitled *El Quijote for children and young adults in German: An approach to proverbs and children's and young adult literature* by María Jesús Barsani Vigo examines in detail the literary and audio-visual translations and adaptations of the work by Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quijote de la Mancha, in an attempt to establish the ways in which the text has been perceived and treated in different European contexts.

To start off, Barsani Vigo argues that the German adaptations of El Quijote for children and young adults in 1621 are "completely Germanized" (p.17), whereas the second translation in 1801 is one of the best and most popular translations in Germany, followed by a third translation in 1848 which was as successful. Reportedly, the first adaptations of Don Quijote for children and young adults which appeared in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were normally illustrated editions.

In general terms, the number of chapters in these adaptations is reduced and as a result, many of such translations read as a continuous narrative, although the order of events is normally maintained. According to this researcher, a main challenge in these translations refers to riddles from Old Spanish as well as proverbs, sayings, and idiomatic expressions, as there tends to be a loss of the irony which characterizes the language of Cervantes.

The analysis centers on the use of *proverbs*, defined by Barsani Vigo as anonymous expressions passed on from one generation to another and which convey facts derived from experience despite having a symbolic or metaphoric component; they constitute moral teachings. Proverbs consist of autonomous statements which tend to be "brief, generic, judgmental, of popular nature" (as defined by Barsanti, 2011, p. 37). Furthermore, they contain phonic features such as rhyme and alliteration, onomatopoeia and assonance. According to this researcher, despite the richness which proverbs enclose, they have had little presence in the translations of Don Quijote for children and young adults. Nonetheless, at least three works: Refranes de Sancho Panza (Imprenta Fernández,

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1916), Cervantes en la Escuela (Acisclo Muñíz, 1913, and Mis primeros refranes del Quijote (Leyva, 2005) do include proverbs in their translations.

The second chapter entitled *Translating to learn: children and young people in the history of foreign language teaching* by Mará Joé Corvo Sanchez, consists of a chronological review of Foreign Language (henceforth, FL) teaching. It begins by stating that during the Middle Ages, Sumerian was taught to the Akkadians in the Persian Gulf and this was the first language to be taught as an FL. The methodology used at that time was rote learning through repeatedly copying words and phrases, and the main use was to study the laws and reading religious and literary works; reading was followed by writing and then by oral practice (this consisted of oral commentaries guided by the teacher). Later evidence on FL is reported for the Egyptians who learned the language of their surrounding territories and whose focus was on “the study of a written language unknown to society at large [Latin]” (p.43).

On the other hand, reportedly Latin and Greek were taught simultaneously in Ancient Rome until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. In the middle Ages, Latin was taught as a FL all over Europe, and FL teaching continued with Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic. Latin as a First Language disappeared and hence it started being taught as a FL, mainly with the aim of understanding the Bible and other religious texts. The main focus was on the use of glossaries, some grammar, and reading, translation, and asking and answering questions. Written practice was incorporated during the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, whereas conversation manuals became popular later on.

During the Renaissance (15<sup>th</sup> century), languages started to be seen as *languages of culture* and they were finally considered *worth learning and teaching*. Second Language (L2) learning became popular, as it was “a sign of distinction and education” (p.51). It involved mainly the study of grammatical rules and reading and it was not addressed at children but mostly at diplomats, travelers, merchants, politicians, and soldiers.

Latin started to be taught to children as a way to teach the catechism and children were taught the alphabet, spelling, and prayers such as the *Sign of the Cross and Our Father*. This teaching began with two years of reading practice to improve students’ pronunciation, followed by writing. Later on, children were taught grammar so that they would be able to speak Latin by the end of elementary school. Young adults then continued with pre-university studies of Latin grammar. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Latin ceased to be a dominant L2, as national languages such as Italian, Spanish, French, and English rose, followed by the other European languages. The main methodology used was still grammatical rules, reading, pronunciation, understanding, and then speaking.

In 1611, a new approach to FL teaching/learning emerged and it combined grammar as well as a so called ‘irregular method’ whereby languages were learned through reading and speaking.

In the 1600s, the idea that children should learn an L2 from an early age and through the help of native speakers instead of relying on grammar was introduced. Yet, the Translation Method was prominent during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century evidenced a convergence of traditional and innovative tendencies in L2 learning, and FL learning/teaching became part of the school curriculum. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in contrast, FL learning/teaching does not rely exclusively on grammatical bilingual dictionaries and books and pronunciation books, as conversation books emerged. Illustrated textbooks for children and bilingual story books also emerged, and the technical era began as the most important innovation of this century, bringing about the Internet, smart boards, and other technological novelties. Nowadays, most FL books are based on the Communicative Approach and they include real life communicative units. In sum, texts and printed images have been supplemented by audiovisual elements in various technological formats.

Although this chapter includes an interesting summary of how language teaching has evolved through history, the main topic of the book, namely new trends in children's literature, is not addressed directly, aside from the reference to the surfacing of illustrated children's and young adult's books.

Chapter three, *An approach to Africanness in Spanish children's literature* by Javier de Agustín begins by pointing out the value of promoting and strengthening children's literature as a "vector of interculturality" (p.69), given that today's society is characterized by migration and social hybridization. The chapter focuses on describing the extent to which African literature is presented to Spanish young adults, given the geographical proximity between Spanish and the African continent.

He points out that the first known literary work of this kind was a journal for children written by Cambodi and published in 1957. The text had missionary content and it combined education, entertainment, and "the African world as an inalienable referent" (p.70); it was a religious journal to bring Christianity to African children and young adults, as it related the lives of exemplary members of the congregation.

One of the main series for children told the adventures of an African boy who had a good heart and liked to help others. Other texts narrated the sad adventures lived by immigrants in their looking for a better life in Europe.

In general, oral and written African texts were translated or transcribed; they consisted of an omniscient narrator and simple story line, narrating events which took place in the African region and which involved either wild animals or people as protagonists (e.g., *La serpiente generosa*, 1977).

According to Corvo Sanchez, African stories normally begin by stating a moral, and the characters represent oppositions such as rational-irrational, wild-domestic, men-women, and dominant-subject. They became "an appropriate vector of transmission for Africans in Spain" (p.89); this is evident in the literary works for children analyzed by this researcher.

Chapter 4 is entitled *The rise and fall of the European West for youth: Spaghetti and Chorizo Westerns at a glance* and it was written by Javier Gil Castaño. The chapter relates the rise and fall

of films made in Italy and in Spain between 1962 and 1976 as a result of the beginning of social modernization in Spain, evidenced in the growth of the population, the number of working people, and the number of professionals and executives, as well as in an increase in the middle class which, in turn, resulted in a change in cultural patterns. During this period, the number of university students went up and mobility spread, illegal publications started entering Spain, freedom of thought increased, and religious practices diminished. It was a period of ideological and political transition, and shallow, cheap tales such as those represented in the Spaghetti and Chorizo Westerns became “the perfect way to keep people entertained without ‘polluting’ their minds with anti-regime ideas” (p.92).

According to Gil Castaño, Spanish cheap and easy to read stories became popular and this served not only to entertain but also to maintain the political situation stable in Spain. Western films about wondering knights and cowboys, gunfighters, and sheriffs who fought villains and rescued women in distress became the norm.

For children’s literary works, the hero was depicted as a classical concept in Western films; this reportedly contributed to creating and defining gender roles.

The fall of Western films began around 1970 as people began to feel offended by the amount of violence; their taste became more refined. Furthermore, as population grew and family and work mobility rates increased, socio-cultural modifications began to take place.

Alicia Gil writes the following chapter entitled, *Towards a feminist perspective of American comics*. The chapter largely describes the process of coming up with and writing a doctoral dissertation on the interpretation of comics as literary works. The author argues that throughout the history of comics, comics were informal and accused of having poor reading standards as well as of restricting children’s fantasy, promoting immorality, harming children’s reading ability, and even “leading to juvenile delinquency” (p.105). Nonetheless, Gil insists that behind any human made material (including comics), there is a specific ideology which represents cultural beliefs and values; this is a main reason which lead her to writing her dissertation on American Comics.

Specifically, through her dissertation work she compared comics with their original literary sources in order to determine any changes in ideology. Her analysis focused on the comics adaptations of *The Martian Chronicles* by Bradbury (1950). Gil argues that despite minor alterations, “the overall ideology of the source texts was maintained in the comics adaptations” (p.107). The only basic difference had to do with the fact that while the stories in the Chronicles were linked, the comics were stand-alones.

Gil insists that in comics, there is a mixture of images and text, but the images do not have the limited role of illustrating the text; they “dramatize, characterize, and convey narrative content across the space of the page” (p.121).

In the final portion of the chapter, Gil analyzed the female image in the *Superman* films. In this analysis, she describes Superman as a tall, good-looking hero while Lois Lane, the protagonist

female figure, does not necessarily portray the typical American beauty but intellectual strength. In fact, this researcher states that “Superman may have been an inspiring character for the male audience, but no less has Lois Lane been for her female followers” (as a successful female reporter, that is; p.127). Unfortunately, this is the only literary work of those analyzed which refers to the feminist approach in American Comics, a topic which the title of her chapter suggests as the main theme which should have been addressed.

Chapter 5 is entitled *Social values in children’s literature of the GDR in the 1970s and 80s: A study of three works*, and it was written by Stefanie Glaser. Glaser starts off by stating that the socio-political principles within the German Democratic Republic (GDR) were promoted in the literature. Hence, literature was restricted to that worth reading; that is, that which benefited education and intellect, not merely a leisure activity. Child and youth literature was seen as “a disguised medium to gain influence on people’s habits as well as on their social and political attitudes” (p. 140). Texts in GDR during that time additionally depicted positive role models of what a good citizen should be.

Overall, the chapter refers to what was expected in literary works, real life GDR (i.e., people’s living conditions, social expectations, and conventions), the extent to which real life and socio-political matters are depicted in literary works, and whether or not it was possible for authors of the time to transmit critical issues to the reader. The analysis focused on three literary works: *I am Nele* by Peter Brock, *the Unknown Grandfather* by Günther Görlich, and *the Pirate’s Heart* by Benno Pludra.

In his novel, Peter Brocks depicted truthfulness, honesty, and regret as the main social values; these values were evidenced in the working conditions (agriculture, industrial plants, schools), a constant need for competition, and pretence illustrated throughout the plot.

Günther Görlich portrays social prejudice as well as agricultural production cooperation and an urge to increase productivity. The main idea promoted was a need to move out of being a passive individual to being a decision-maker.

Benno Pludra’s work reinforces the socialist German idea that “bad people do not exist” (p.157) and hence, a naive main character is portrayed as hard working, honest, and correct, just like a good socialist child should be.

Overall, GDR principles such as helpfulness, participation and sharing, social equality and freedom, as well as communication among family members is stressed in child and youth literature, as evidenced in the three literary works analyzed.

*Translation as a modeling tool to protect the values of the target culture: the case of Galician children’s literature translations within the dominant Spanish context* by Lourdes Lorenzo, Ana Pereira, and Ana Fernández describe the role of translation in the promotion of the autonomous Galician culture and language in North-West Spanish. They report that starting during the Middle Ages, Galician was replaced by Spanish in that geographic region. Nonetheless, starting in the 1970s, there was an effort to develop the Galician language and culture. Children’s literature has

since been used as a natural way to introduce Galician to children and youth, and translation played a main role due to the lack of Galician writers and books; translators were in charge of reconstructing the Galician culture. Overall, Galician icons and idiosyncrasies were added to the translations of children's books. For instance, Galician idioms and sayings and domestic trends within the various translations evidenced "a strong Galician flavor" (p. 168), a procedure referred to as democratization: a means through which "source cultural references are replaced by target culture ones" (p.168).

In a similar study, Beatriz Rodríguez Rodríguez assesses the translations of children's literature (specifically English into Spanish and English into Galician) in a chapter entitled *Children's literature in English and its translations and adaptations into Spanish and Galician: A critical approach*. She points out that a great amount of children's Spanish books are adaptations; hence, translators shall assume that "the reading process improves the child's intellectual development" (p.173). In other words, the reader's age, skills, and didactic knowledge affect the translator's decisions in adapting a literary piece to the children's cultural and intellectual conditions.

For example, in her analysis of *the Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne (2006) translated from Spanish into Galician, Rodríguez Rodríguez describes a change in the cover which reportedly obeys to the policy regarding the translation into Galician whereby the target language and culture shall be highlighted. In fact, she points out that, according to the Association of Galician Translators, translation is seen not merely as a means to promote the Galician culture but as a political tool.

Another literary piece analyzed by Rodríguez Rodríguez is *El Ingenioso Hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes (1605). She describes this translation into Galician uses modern elements with a humorous and didactic function in "over 85% of the intertextual references" (p.175).

Overall, Rodríguez Rodríguez argues that translated children's texts are shortened and adapted to the child's comprehension level (i.e., simplified plot and conversations) and to didactic norms. The young reader is normally placed in a familiar and easy context so as to get his/her interest.

In *Sexual representations and sexual stereotypes in young adult literature: Judy Blume's Forever (1975) and Melvin Burgess' Doing it (2004)*, Paula Rodríguez Ubeira argues that young adult literature is designed to help teenagers "cope with the time and culture in which they are approaching adulthood" (as argued in Bodart, 2006). Therefore, she analyzes the roles which women (and boys) are given in both literary works according to each era.

Firstly, Rodríguez Ubeira analyzes the novel for young adults, *Forever*, written during a historical period during which abortion and birth control methods became legal in the United States. The novel is described as exploring the freedoms which women had reached in regards to sex, although they still "get punished for having sex out of the norm" (p.193). It also highlights how some teenagers might not act responsibly when it comes to engaging in sexual relationships. A main topic in this novel is the fight against pre-established stereotypes of women wherein their sexual desires

and needs are underestimated and ignored. The role of women who need to remain virgins until marriage is changed, but although the female characters are not punished for having sex with more than one partner, some characters do get punished for doing so; this is exemplified in unwanted pregnancies and in the uncertainty of not knowing who the father is. An implication that being responsible and faithful to a single partner is the desired behavior is clearly established. In the same novel, boys too are punished for being irresponsible and childish.

In *Doing it*, sex is presented as something not to be afraid of and experimentation is acceptable. Nonetheless, Rodríguez Ubeira insists that stereotypes are still emphasized despite it being a modern novel. Specifically, sex without love and virginity to avoid unwanted pregnancies and venereal diseases are portrayed. The novel additionally depicts boys as reacting mainly on hormones and girls as acting according to boys' demands when it comes to sex, as boys are said to force girls to have sex against their will.

Another stereotype on women's role is that of weight: chubby girls portray a negative stereotype as compared to skinny girls, though Burgers presumably opposes this belief. Finally, in contrast to *Forever*, *Doing it* portrays boys as responsible, showing respect and self control.

The chapter entitled *the Medium is an Adventure* by Hermes Salceda highlights the importance of the mediums used to present a literary piece (i.e., how language and image are combined). This relevance of illustrations in literary works is most common in children's and young adults' books, and literature is meant to be read and to be contemplated, as seen in the fact that many writers have focused on "breaking stereotypes and bringing together the borderlines between the different arts" (p.208).

For instance, *Upside-Downs* by Gustave Verbeek consists of a series of reversible cartoons published in the Sunday Herald as a supplement; these cartoon strips are placed in a symmetrical order so as to interchange their positions, depending on how the reader looks at it; in these so called reversible cartoons, the characters are placed upside down. This literary piece is a *palindrome*; that is, a text based on all sorts of media. The main premise within these literary works is that, "lineally following a series of adventures is not enough and they have to make the necessary movements to unveil the world proposed by the cartoonist" (p.212). In such texts, the direction of standard reading turns into an empiric experimentation which demands intellectual discovery; this process is enjoyable for children and young adults. Stories are transformed into puzzles which children and young adults are challenged to resolve, according to Salceda.

A similar literary work analyzed is *NogegoN* by the Schuiten brothers; it too uses palindrome. In this book, the spine itself serves as "its axis from which the reader turns the pages, held bounded by the cover, back and forth" (p.215).

Overall, these literary pieces are presented through a medium which requires the active participation of the reader.

In the final chapter, *Colour, costume, and animated films: Analysis of the social and emotional placement of a character in Walt Disney films*, Celia Vazquez and Alejandro Sierra describes the role which color and costume designs have in Disney's children's stories. Firstly, they describe custom and color as "a semiotic system through which characters in fiction speak to their readers" (p.221). They further point out that color and custom enclose symbolism and codes which are obtained through cultural or religious references; there are differences regarding the meaning of color from one culture to another. The historical meaning of colors is described and an analysis of the meaning and use of color and costumes in three Disney films is presented.

In *Cinderella*, the authors describe costumes as a character in and of themselves, not just as simple ornaments. Cinderella herself is portrayed initially as a maid wearing simple shapes and then as a princess in her silver dress and perfect fit. The wickedness of Cinderella's step mother and sisters is enhanced through color and costumes, as well (long sleeves, high collars, elevated hair styles, large feet, etc.). In contrast, the good characters are represented as gentle.

Similarly, in *Beauty and the Beast*, colors and costumes enhance the message and transition from one season to another depicts the characters' emotions (blue and gray to depict their sadness and more vibrant colors to show happiness in the end).

Finally, the colors and costumes used in *Pocahontas* depict a typical reserved Indian young woman and the British soldiers are represented more as Spanish conquistadores.

In sum, the chapter effectively shows the importance which color and costumes have in portraying not only the identity of characters but also socio-cultural values and traditions, in particular in Disney's children's films and texts.

Although some of the chapters included do not truly refer to *new trends* in children's and young adults' literature, various ways in which literary works for children and young adults are reviewed and hence, new ideas on themes to research are likely to emerge; this was a main goal in this publication.