

Between national traditions and global circulation: the illustrations of children's book as a frontier

Research seminar organised at the University of Grenoble Alpes on 24 and 25 May 2023

Considering the know-how and print technologies as well as through its circulation, the children's book undeniably belongs to the modern world, and illustrations are an inseparable attribute of it. This is why researchers such as Claude-Anne Parmegiani, Ségolène Le Men, Sophie Van der Linden and Annie Renonciat have already explored the visuality of children's literature in detail. The interaction between text and illustration, which is crucial for the modern children's book, can be characterised by the notions of tension, dynamism and border.

The logic of the circulation of information in Early Modern and Modern Europe has also meant that printed books, including illustrated children's books, have spread mainly from the publishing centres to the periphery, thus contributing to the homogenisation of national traditions and the formation of a common European space. The universality of the content of children's literature also played a role in this process: children's books appeal to the direct experience of visible objects and the stable universal world of Cartesian ideas and emotions. The fact that Comenius made children's books one of the tools for studying foreign languages was due in part to the universality of the image and its ability to cross national and linguistic boundaries.

In the 17th century, the representation of the exotic world was also built up in this European space, in particular thanks to the illustrations of the printers in the Netherlands, which could then be used in other books, thus accompanying different texts and circulating from one country to another (Benjamin Schmidt). In the 18th century, the dissemination of translated or adapted texts by Weisse and other pioneers of children's magazines created a common European space for children's literature (Genton, Schmideler, Zille, 2023 [forthcoming]), in which texts and images circulated both spatially and culturally, so that, according to Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, "since the end of the nineteenth century, Europeans have shared a substantial visual heritage" (p. 124). Moreover, although the history of children's book illustration has been marked by strong national traditions, as illustrated by the Italian *figurina* (Faeti, 1972), it can be assumed that, in recent years, globalisation has gradually weakened these national traditions and an enrichment of exchanges, hybridisation and cross-breeding.

Translation provides another example of the circulation of images that do not always coincide with that of texts. Thus, while the first two French translations of *Pinocchio* used the illustrations of Mazzanti and Magni for one (trad. Emilio, Paris, Tramelan L. A. Voumard, 1902), and those of Mussino for the other (trad. Comtesse de Gencé, Paris, Albin Michel, 1912), subsequent translations have not always adopted the Italian illustrations.

Moreover, we cannot rule out the hypothesis that, when the translated works retain the latter, semantic shifts introduced by the translation do not modify the link between text and image. Thus, on the contrary, in a much more recent period, new translations return to the first Italian illustrators

(Carlo Collodi, *The adventures of Pinocchio*, Translated by Carol della Chiesa, Illustrated by Carlo Chiostrì, Giunti, Florence, 2000, Paperback).

Furthermore, Magali Nachtergaele emphasises that in the digital age and its culture of the screen, literature is enriched by forms known as "outside the book", thus reviving "its orality, its performance, its graphic, plastic and even bibliophilic dimension". If, despite apprehensions, the digital book has not replaced the printed book, it has on the contrary opened up new possibilities. With the augmented reality book, the young reader can animate the frozen illustration of the printed book (see the "Histoires animées" collection at Albin Michel Jeunesse) or transform it into a game (as with the books in the "Adopte un Tétrok" collection, published by Margot). Children are no longer immobile readers, dependent on the author, the illustrator and the adult reader: together with them, he now takes an active part in reading, to such an extent that Anne-Marie Petitjean could speak of a "reading revolution" introduced by digital technology.

The children's book can also be understood as a material object through the notion of border. It is the space where 'adult' representations of the ideal childhood, of man, of the world, of the future, and the individual world of the child interact. The relationship between these two worlds involves border tensions, even if they are masked by images of a carefree peace and an unchanging, safe world. In the words of Christian Bruel, the offer of children's literature "generally presented as peaceful and consensual" is in reality "political", "as much as the conditions of its reception" (p. 14).

Thus the idea of the border, an obstacle, but also a buffer zone legal or illegal, easy or dangerous, is at the centre of children's literature. We therefore propose to address this common and indisputable territory of the border in illustrated children's literature, from a synchronic and diachronic perspective, based on the following questions:

- national traditions and global circulation: can we talk about national traditions? How and when were they formed? What circulations can be observed between linguistic, cultural and geographical areas? How has the era of globalisation modified these circulations? Does the illustrated album without text occupy a particular place in these circulations?
- visuality: what circulations exist between the visual arts and illustration? How do texts and illustrations interact? How has the opening to digital technology influenced children's literature?
- translation and illustration: what happens to the link between text and image when texts are translated? Is the image really universal? Is it the translator's ally or enemy? Do cultural particularities reduce its scope? How is the iconotextual functioning of the album taken into account during translation?

Proposals for papers should be sent by 24 February 2023 to laure.thibonnier@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr, natacha.rimasson-fertin@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr and sylvie.martin-mercier@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr. They should be accompanied by a brief biobibliography and include the title of the paper and a summary of about 250 words. Feedback will be given by 02 March.

Working languages: French, English

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