

Trends on the International Children's Book Market, or: Miss Pippi's Long March to China

Books are usually embedded in the culture and language of their origins. Some works may be considered masterpieces within their own cultural realm, and even if they have the good fortune to be promoted abroad, they would sometimes still not find their place in the literary canon of certain (linguistic) areas. Usually, products which share the same common subsets as the predominant big sellers have good chances to become sales coups as well - of course only as long as the consumer's saturation level has not yet been filled. The international children's book market - including both producers and consumers - however, does not categorically follow common sales rules. Children's literature and children's publishing operate in a system where cultural values, pedagogical idea(l)s, questions of profitability and cost-effectiveness, and - last but not least - the consumers' taste(s) coincide and constantly contest both market leadership and the audience favor.

Contemporary literature for children comprises a broad variety of different genres and topics. Hence, publishing houses throughout the world increasingly depend on microeconomic strategies such as market-, target group- and field research, in order to be able to place their products successfully within the different segments of their own national and the international book market. In my project I will not only try to detect and analyse the trajectories of trend flows on the international children's book market. Moreover, I will regard children's book as migrants: What happens when a story leaves its own cultural realm moving abroad? Why could Harry Potter conquer the world whereas Pippi Longstocking was bidden a rather cold welcome when she was first introduced to French, US American, and Chinese children? Why do some classics of European or Asian youth literature become equally popular while others fail to attract an audience and remain confined to their source countries despite all advertising attempts? And finally: Who is setting trends on the international children's book market?

Research Interests

- Education
- History of Childhood
- Children's Literature
- Modern Chinese Literature and Culture
- Popular Culture