

Tracking Trends and Brands in the International Children's Book Market

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Abstract

Books are embedded in the culture and language of their origins. Some works may have achieved classic status within their own cultural realm, and yet, even if they have the good fortune to be successfully promoted abroad, they do not necessarily manage to get included in foreign literary canons. Classics or other long-sellers from a particular nation, culture or linguistic area would normally stand a good chance of also being marketed to great effect beyond their national, cultural or linguistic borders, as long as the consumers' saturation point has not yet been reached. The international children's book market does not, however, categorically follow these common rules. Children's literature and children's publishing operate in a system in which cultural values, educational idea(l)s, considerations of profitability and cost-effectiveness, and consumers' tastes coincide. In this article I shall analyze the interplay between those who make, market and consume children's fiction in conjunction with the initiation and spread of book market trends. By examining the itineraries of two children's book protagonists between the East and the West, namely Pippi Långstrump [Pippi Longstocking] and Sun Wukong, I will argue that the translation and adaptation of children's fiction may be regarded as a means of creating mobile and hybridized "book migrants" who have the potential to set and initiate trends in the international children's book market.

Key words: children's literature, classics, trend, brand, gatekeeper, transmediality, transculturality, asymmetry, translation, (cultural context) adaptation, hybridity, migration

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