

# KINDERLITERATUR Hans-Heino Ewers/Gertrud Lehnert/Emer O'Sullivan (Hrsg.) IM INTERKULTURELLEN PROZESS

Studien  
zur Allgemeinen  
und Vergleichenden  
Kinderliteratur-  
wissenschaft

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# Kinderliteratur im interkulturellen Prozeß

Studien zur allgemeinen und vergleichenden  
Kinderliteraturwissenschaft

Herausgegeben von Hans-Heino Ewers, Gertrud Lehnert  
und Emer O'Sullivan

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### Vorwort

»Wer auf dem Wege zur Komparatistik je glaubt, er sei an seinem Ziele angelangt, muß wissen, daß er von diesem Weg abgekommen ist.«  
(Erwin Koppen)

Der vorliegende Band präsentiert die Ergebnisse einer von der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft geförderten Tagung, die im Juli 1990 als erste ihrer Art im deutschsprachigen Bereich in Bonn stattfand: »Internationale Aspekte der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Theorie – Übersetzung – Rezeption«. Veranstaltet wurde sie von Erwin Koppen, Inhaber des Lehrstuhls für Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft der Universität Bonn, der sie indessen nicht mehr miterleben konnte: Wenige Wochen zuvor war er nach schwerer Krankheit im Alter von 60 Jahren gestorben. Die Komparatistik der Bundesrepublik verlor damit einen ihrer bedeutendsten Fachvertreter, einen herausragenden Gelehrten von immenser Belesenheit und einen toleranten und verständnisvollen akademischen Lehrer und Vorgesetzten. Hans-Heino Ewers, Direktor des Instituts für Jugendbuchforschung Frankfurt, der als Mitveranstalter von vornherein maßgeblich an der Konzeption beteiligt gewesen war, übernahm dankenswerterweise die Leitung und ermöglichte so die Durchführung der Bonner Tagung.

Die Innovationskraft von Erwin Koppens Begeisterung für grenzüberschreitende literarische Phänomene sowie seine Offenheit gegenüber dem Neuen, gegenüber auch dem, was nicht dem bisherigen, eingefahrenen Wissenschaftskanon entspricht, wird gerade an der Konzeption einer solchen Tagung deutlich. Als erste komparatistische Veranstaltung zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur in Deutschland erschloß sie sowohl der Kinderliteraturforschung als auch der Komparatistik neue Arbeitsfelder und -methoden. Die Kinder- und Jugendliteratur war lange kein Thema für die traditionelle Komparatistik, obgleich sie ein komparatistischer Gegenstand par excellence ist. In ihrer internationalen Vernetzung entspricht sie mehr noch als das literarische Leben schlechthin der Goetheschen Vorstellung von Weltliteratur als einem Prozeß des wechselseitigen Austauschs der Nationalliteraturen – eben dieses Verständnis von Weltliteratur ist zentral für das Selbstverständnis der Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft, und damit auch das Bewußtsein für das Spezifische sprachgrenzenüberschreitender literarischer Phänomene.

Im Hinblick auf ihre Verbreitung und Rezeption durch das kindliche wie erwachsene Lesepublikum ist gerade die Kinderliteratur ein Weg zur Komparatistik, wie es kaum einen besseren gibt. Kindliche LeserInnen werden gleichsam wie von selbst zu einer internationalen Literaturkonzeption erzogen, die wenig von nationaler Beschränkung weiß. Wie selbstverständlich wird die Kinder- und Jugendliteratur von ihren jugendlichen LeserInnen so rezipiert, als gebe es nur eine unteilbare Literatur und nicht viele Literaturen in vielen Sprachen. Das hat Vor- und Nachteile und liegt unter anderem am

# 1. Theorie

# Beyond the Restrictive Frameworks of the Past: Semiotics of Children's Literature – A New Perspective for the Study of the Field

Zohar Shavit (*Tet-Aviv*)

In this rather programmatic and provocative paper, I would like to shed light on the current state of affairs prevailing in the field, and to propose some new research perspectives which could better materialize the disciplinary potential of children's literature studies and lead the way to a new and promising future.

1. From being shrouded in total oblivion, children's literature has become an issue worthy of discussion. A new interest in children's literature has arisen during the last three decades. New works have been published, new journals established, and the field has become so active that sometimes we might even be misled into believing that it is prospering.

Playing the devil's advocate, I must say that I am not party to what I regard as an act of self-deception. Granted, I am very suspicious. After reading a large portion of the studies on children's literature, I am afraid I cannot but conclude that this new field of research, which is in the process of development, has not been fully utilized by its scholars. This is so because scholars are not really interested in studying children's literature as a literary-cultural phenomenon, but prefer to impose upon it methods whose value lies in dealing with adult literature, if at all. Most scholars prefer to study children's literature within the context of traditional and rather worn-out questions of »literary criticism« instead of applying the latest achievements of literary studies and cultural studies to this new field.

2. Let us begin with a simple question:

Why study children's literature?

Why not peacefully tread the familiar paths of traditional disciplines of »literary criticism«, pay a visit to Shakespeare and Dante, stroll with Goethe and Schiller and then go back as far as Homer?

Why agonize over a field which is just beginning to acquire a name for itself as a legitimate field of academic scholarship?

Why seek to break new grounds?

The answer to all these questions lies, to my mind, in the scholarly value of the field, its recent achievements, in what is yet to be accomplished, and most important of all – in the academic challenge latent within the field:

Researching children's literature constitutes a stimulating academic challenge because the field is new, young and currently generating sound and responsible scholarly work whose value lies beyond mere innovation. Most important of all, this field, more than any other field of literary studies and related disciplines, enables us to be engaged in innova-

tive and pioneering work, instead of treading the beaten tracks marked out for us by previous researchers.

Furthermore, for scholars of cultural studies, children's literature offers a much wider range of academic issues than do traditional fields of research. This is the case because children's literature, more than any other literary system, results from a conglomerate of relationships between several systems in culture, among which the most important are the social, the educational and the literary. If one is interested in studying such complex relationships in culture, if one is interested in the mechanism of culture and its dynamics, children's literature is the most promising area of research.

No other field equals children's literature in the immense scope of the cultural parameters involved. Children's literature is the only system I know of that belongs simultaneously and indispensably to the literary and the social-educational systems. It is the only system whose products have always purposefully addressed two antithetical audiences, catering to the needs and expectations of both.

No other field is, to quite the same extent, the result of such diverse cultural constraints; consequently, no other field enables us to inquire into the mechanism of culture, cultural manipulations and cultural procedures in the same way as children's literature does. Some excellent studies of childhood, children's culture and children's literature published in recent years (to mention just few: Ariès 1962, 1972; Arnold 1980, Badinter 1980, Brüggemann 1982, 1987, 1991; Coveney 1967, Cripps 1983, Dahl 1986, Darling 1968, Davis 1976, de Mause 1975, Donelson 1975, 1978; Dusinger 1987, Ewers 1989, 1990; Ghesquiere 1989, Grenz 1981, Hearne 1989, Jackson 1989, Kaminski 1987, Klingberg 1978, Macleod 1975, Perrot 1992, 1993; Pickering 1977, 1981, 1993; Pollock 1983, Rose 1984, Steinlein 1987, Stewart 1979, Stone 1977-80, Summerfield 1984, Tabbert 1991, Thwaite 1972, Zipes 1988) support, I believe, my conviction and point to the huge potential of the field. As is clearly manifested by these recent studies, inquiry into children's literature proffers a whole new cultural perspective, based on a newly discovered body of primary works which has yet to be academically examined, and new, different methodological approaches through which this body of knowledge may be apprehended.

From what I have said, it is quite clear that I strongly believe in the huge academic potential of the field. I also believe that a lot has recently been achieved, but much more is yet to be accomplished. It seems to me that we face the danger of resting on our laurels without fully realizing the potential of the field; that we are not aware enough of where we stand and what we are confronting at a crucial academic crossroads in terms of the development of the field.

3. In an interview with Maurice Sendak, he made the following remark:

»We who work on children's books inhabit a sort of literary shtetl.«

We, scholars of children's literature, may well borrow Sendak's phrasing. There is no doubt in my mind that we are the shtetl of literary studies. In the academic world today, research into children's literature is not really legitimized, not highly respected, and if is tolerated at all, it is perceived as a peripheral and insignificant field of research. In short, research into children's literature currently suffers from an inferior status. And if nothing is done about it, this will remain so for years to come.

In order to eliminate any doubts, let us examine some facts first. A good point of departure, is for example, the status of research into children's literature in the Western world today. A survey of various academic curricula reveals that only a few countries support the existence of academic institutions devoted to research into children's literature. Fewer offer positions in children's literature, let alone chairs. Most well known universities in the United States, the United Kingdom and France for instance, do not offer courses, not to mention full programs, in children's literature.

Even in cases when children's literature is taught at a university level, even when we find odds and ends of research here and there, we should not be misled by delusions: Children's literature is regarded by traditional »dressed to kill« literary criticism as an unwanted step-child.

Being the step-child, the Cinderella of literary studies, entails several implications. Like Cinderella, who has to prove that she can indeed wear the »right« shoe, a scholar of children's literature doesn't stand on his/her own merits. He (or she) is always asked to prove that he (or she) can wear the hat of »a real scholar« if he (or she) wishes to be accepted by scholars of »general literary criticism.« Only if one is esteemed in a field other than children's literature, does one stand a fair chance of becoming a member of the academic-literary community. Otherwise, one would most probably be regarded as a »fellow-traveler«, belonging essentially to a different academic domain, certainly not to »Literary Studies«.

If we paraphrase what Maurice Sendak said upon receiving a prize for his children's illustrations (his father then asked him whether he would now be allowed to work on »real books«: »When I won a prize for *Wild Things*, my father spoke for a great many critics when he asked whether I would now be allowed to work on »real books«), we can say that in most cases one »is allowed« to deal with children's literature either because one is not very highly esteemed, or because one has gained recognition as a scholar of adult literature, or any other »respectable« field. Research into children's literature is regarded at worst as a whim, or at best, as an additional component of other disciplines such as education, sociology and psychology. (To the famous American saying: Publish or Perish, one can easily add: publish in fields other than children's literature, if you do not wish to perish.

4. When an academic is presented as a scholar of children's literature, he will most likely encounter a skeptical reaction, and if the scholar happens to be female, this would most likely be followed by »how nice«. Most academics tend to regard children's literature as »nice« and »cute«, but not as anything »significant« enough to be dealt with seriously.

By no means do I wish to claim that children's literature is neither »nice« nor »cute«. I would even go as far as saying that in most cases it is less boring than modern adult literature. However, I do wish to emphasize that this is not the point. The question of whether we like children's literature or not is simply irrelevant to its potential for constituting a worthy subject of scholarship.

I contend, that this question of its disciplinary potential can be dealt with only in terms of the academic value of the field, or otherwise phrased, in its ability to supply frames of reference for new questions, that is to say, questions which otherwise could not be dealt with so expediently.

In my view, the rationale for choosing children's literature as an object for research inheres in its status as a catalyst for the discussion of complex questions relating to the study of the history of culture and cultural mechanisms. In children's literature, scholars can find one of the most fascinating and most fruitful fields of research for questions of this kind in their broad sense.

Nevertheless, as things now stand, scholars of the semiotics of culture have hardly discovered the academic potential of the field, whereas scholars of »literary criticism« and »literary aesthetics« show no interest in making children's literature their object of research.

In light of the achievements of the study of children's literature in the last decades in terms of its contribution to our understanding of mechanism of culture, I hope that the first group of scholars will soon adopt a different position. On the other hand, I believe that from their point of view, scholars of »literary criticism« are right in their rejection of children's literature as a legitimate field of research, since they differ in their research motivation. In fact, I contend that research into children's literature is misplaced among traditional studies of literature.

Analysis of the state-of-the-art of »literary criticism« in the Western world requires a separate discussion. Here I would like briefly to refer to the point of departure of literary disciplines and to explain why, in my view, research into children's literature cannot find an appropriate niche among them.

In the Western academic world, especially in the United States, the field of literary studies is still often governed by traditional questions of »literary criticism«. The point of departure of »literary criticism« has been and still is, a normative one: i.e., texts are discussed in order to explore their merits and values; the main business of the scholar remains to establish a cultural paradigm, and to participate in its examination.

5. Since its inception, children's literature has maintained a different set of literary norms from those which govern adult literature. Societal literary norms demanded that writing for children differ from writing for adults. It can be formulated as a universal that the norms governing adult literature never simultaneously govern children's literature. Furthermore, literary norms are more often than not translated into children's literature by way of simplification. Hence for instance, when norms of sophistication or complexity prevail in adult literature, they will be extensively modified or sometimes even altogether discarded in children's literature. Thus, due to the circumstances of its development, it has become impossible to attribute »high literary quality« to books for children in the same manner as it is possible for adult literature.

I do not see much point in initiating an attempt to change this state of affairs. Culture, by its very nature, is stratified and hierarchical. Trying to change the status of children's literature is bound to be a waste of time and will not lead us anywhere. What is left for us to do is to realize that as long as the academic criteria for selecting texts as an object of study are determined primarily by the alleged »literary value« of the texts, research into children's literature has very little to do and even less to accomplish. Any attempt to attribute high literary value to a text for children can only end up in a farce.

6. Thus, the study of children's literature can never hope to flourish within the frame-

work of traditional »literary criticism«. However, surprising as it may sound, a survey of a large portion of the studies on children's literature, demonstrate clearly that quite a few scholars, especially in the United States of America, prefer to study children's literature within the context of traditional questions of »literary criticism«, though, more often than not, these questions are recycled with glossy new embellishments.

We may ask why scholars venturing into a new academic field prefer to work in a traditional discipline? Why has the thrust of studies in children's literature to date been lacking in the self-confidence essential to the pursuit and acquisition of a new theoretical framework? Why do students adhere to prevailing and well-acclaimed tenets, and why are they not able to break away from conceptual commitments to the past?

The answer lies perhaps in the lack of self-assurance required for a theoretical venture. Scholars feel more secure and self-assured sticking to familiar issues that have already been raised, because their choice of the field of study is problematic enough. The result, however, has been unmistakable.

In spite of the massive spurt of so-called research into children's literature, we cannot really admit pride in a great many achievements. The main outcome has been that much of the research has underlined the deflated image of the field, and strengthened the opposition between »serious« research on »serious« works of literature, and the less important type of research, i.e. that which dominates children's literature. The »commodity«, to use Bourdieu's term, offered by scholars of children's literature, has not successfully convinced the academic world to accept children's literature as a legitimate field of research for literary studies.

Dare I elaborate the metaphor of Cinderella by slightly changing the fairytale: I believe that in trying to place the study of children's literature among traditional literary studies, we are trying on the wrong shoe. Like the sisters of Cinderella who cut off their toes and heels respectively, we would be cutting off our noses to spite our faces if we try to wear the shoe; we shall have achieved little, and be handicapped to boot.

If the traditional road cannot lead us very far, which road should we then take?

7. Before answering this question, I would like to make a small digression and to maintain that at least one area of research had flourished, despite the overall sterile position of the field. I refer here to studies on the history of children's literature, which have managed in the last two decades to yield significant and innovative scholarly works. These studies have primarily dealt with the questions of the emergence of children's literature and the creation of the boundaries between adult and children's literature, the process in which the system of books for children was established, the question of the linkage between societal concepts and children's literature, the textual implications of this linkage and textual manipulations. Scholars, who based their research on this new body of primary works, have discovered a new cultural horizon.

Why has historical research been so fruitful? Why did it manage to succeed where other aspects of study failed?

The answer, to my mind, is evident: The scholarly results of historical research into children's literature were valuable due to the nature of the questions raised, and the disciplines employed. What historical research has retained that other spheres of research



lacked, is a clear system of theoretical concepts which allowed it to pursue an adequate standard of research.

8. Hence, it was an appropriate set of questions, placed in a coherent theoretical framework, that allowed for the potential of the field to be actualized and generated noteworthy issues for research.

There is no need to repeat here the question of the need for a theoretical framework. Most philosophers of science would agree that any research with academic aspirations is unworkable without the support of a theory, namely, without an explicit or implicit set of concepts which establish a distinct set of questions. This set of questions designates the scope of the research, its corpus, its line of argument and its course of development.

If we adopt this understanding of a scientific theory as our point of departure, the issue at stake is not whether the academic study of children's literature must take place within a theoretical framework. The issue at stake is which theory can provide the best framework for our academic needs.

I would like to emphasize right now that I strongly reject the juxtaposition between competing theories which is so fashionable at present in the United States. When structuralism, semiotics, feminism etc. are put in one pot, no more than lip service can be paid to the academic enterprise. Competing theories, if they are indeed competing in terms of their conceptual perception of the issues involved, exclude each other, as such they do not belong to the same »family of theories.« There is conceptually no way to reconcile them: they differ in their basic assumptions, in their interests – in fact in their subject matter. When carefully analyzed, it becomes obvious that quite often they do not even relate to the same field. The fashionable attempt to bring them together fails to take note of these differences and their lack of a common scientific language, and cannot carry research very far.

It is true that all scholars stand to benefit from the results of research done in fields other than their own; only a narrow-minded scholar would deny this. But scholars who wish to do scientific scholarship, must work within a coherent framework of theoretical concepts. Needless to say, this set of theoretical concepts should be continuously and permanently examined and re-examined.

9. I contend that, in terms of the existing theories in the humanities, it is the semiotics of culture which can ensure a vital reservoir of questions to be addressed by research into children's literature.

Before exploring the hidden possibilities of the semiotics of culture, I would like to make a small digression concerning the development of semiotics in the 20th century. Most scholars seem to be unaware of the fact that semiotics has developed in two different directions. The one, which became popular in the Western world mainly through the French school of semiotics, was not capable of dealing with issues pertaining to cultural history in terms of their diversity, heterogeneity, and contradictory aspects. The other one, known as semiotics of culture, developed within the Slavic tradition and later within the Tel Aviv School of Semiotics, concentrated exactly on such issues (Bogatyřev 1976, 1976a, 1976b; Even-Zohar 1979, 1990; Jakobson 1934, 1960; Lotman 1976, 1976a, 1976b, 1978, 1984; Tynajnov 1971, and to some extent Bourdieu 1971, 1984).

This latter tradition of semiotics of culture, postulated from its inception that culture entails a highly complicated set of relations and developed a set of theoretical concepts as well as a methodology for dealing with such relations. Thus it became possible to discuss issues involving complex oppositions, contradictory historical developments, ambivalent patterns as well as their dynamics in terms of the systemic relations in culture and their functioning.

With this postulate as its point of departure, the semiotics of culture enables us to handle the multi-systemic situation typical of children's literature and its various implications. Since the semiotics of culture postulates the hierarchical organization of culture, one of its main tasks is to ask how this hierarchy was created and is being created, rather than to try to participate in the process of shaping it.

Thus, within this frame of reference, a scholar does not need to change the evaluation of texts for children, in order to legitimize their study.

10. In order to establish the field of semiotics of children's literature, scholars must change their postulate of study. As a first step, scholars should rest their study neither on value judgment, nor on »educational purposes.« As I have already claimed, evaluative questions, by their very nature, limit the scope of research, and in the case of children's literature, they may even boomerang.

Yes, it makes sense to discuss *Alice in Wonderland* and *Watership Down* in the framework of the questions offered by traditional literary studies (though this may not necessarily be very rewarding), but these works belong to a limited category of texts which are purposely designated officially for children but appeal in fact to adults (an issue with which I deal in Shavit 1986, chapter on »Ambivalent texts«). At any rate these works of literature are simply exceptions which prove my general argument: they do not represent the substance of children's literature, not even in terms of the official system of books for children; consequently scholars who study them cannot but be pretending to deal with »children's literature.«

Educational aspirations, on the other hand, turn children's literature into a mere vehicle for achieving other goals. Such an approach is of course justifiable in the framework of pedagogics; it actually constitutes the core of this undertaking. The mandate given to educationalists is exactly this one, but this does not necessarily mean that pedagogical issues should determine options or objectives of research, as has more often than not been the case.

In order to free the discussion from such limitations, our point of departure should assume that children's literature is an integral part of a stratified system. Secondly, normative or ideological questions must be totally excluded from research practice. Instead, a descriptive-analytical approach must be adopted. This means that the texts for discussion should be selected not on the basis of value judgments, but due to their significance for the issues at stake and their capability to illuminate them. Thus, texts will be studied not because they are believed to be of high literary value, or of high educational value, but because their analysis can contribute to a better understanding of a specific literary-cultural phenomenon.

The benefits of such an approach are, it seems, self-evident.

10.1. A normative approach considerably limits the scope of potential questions. Moreover, it imposes on scholars the task of the critic whose main, if not sole, responsibility is to determine the public's taste. Such a task, important as it is, simply does not belong to our domain of research. Rather it belongs to the domain of »people-in-the-culture«, whom society has mandated to determine the public's taste. Thus, the first step which must be taken involves a redefinition of the boundaries between research and criticism which have been obscured in most traditional literary studies.

Once the boundaries become clear, as well as the mandate given to the scholar, scholars will invest their time and energy in scientific work, rather than in interfering with the critic's tasks. This of course does not mean that as people-in-the-culture we cannot take part in the process of determining public taste, nor that as scholars we cannot describe this process and account for it, or wear the hat of critics outside our scholarly enterprise and engage in this process. It only means that the two different spheres are not to be confused. In the same way that we do not become children while reading children's literature, we should not change into critics when we are involved in the scholarly investigation of children's literature.

10.2. Such an approach will enable raising new questions whose potential is virtually unlimited. It is, after all, the very objective of a theory to generate as many questions as possible, which can guarantee its flexibility and its capacity to survive. It is the existence of a reservoir of new questions, or the very existence of its potential, which ensures the ongoing vitality of any discipline. When the same questions are repeated over and over again, the discipline in which they are asked tends to exhaust itself rather rapidly.

11. One of the advantages of a semiotic discipline lies in its spectrum of options for the questions raised by research, their flexibility and openness. However, a semiotic frame of reference is very ambitious with regard to the almost unlimited perspectives it involves, but it is also very modest, or if you wish, unambitious, with regard to the eventual answers reached.

This is so first of all because of methodological possibilities which enable us to deal with minor as well as major segments of culture, and secondly because the semiotics of culture does not seek to monopolize answers. Quite the contrary, by its very nature, it almost rules out the possibility of a simple, one-sided answer for any question.

As I have said, studying children's literature in the framework of the semiotics of culture, promises to be most fruitful in dealing with the conglomerate of cultural relationships provided by children's literature. From this perspective, it seems to me that »the sky is the limit«. It would be impossible to cover here even a small range of the potential options generated.

12. A thorough description of the hidden possibilities of the semiotics of children's literature is not only time consuming; at this stage it is unfortunately an impossible mission, as the field has only just begun to blossom. Yet, because semiotics of culture is already considerably accomplished, and even more crucially, because quite a few scholars of children's literature have done semiotic research without explicitly indicating this as such (to mention just few: Brückman 1982, Brüggemann 1985, Chambers 1977, Ewers 1987, 1991; Higonnet 1992, Lehnert 1992, Macleod 1976, 1992; O'Sullivan 1990,

Wunderlich & Morrissey 1982, Wunderlich 1992, Zipes 1979, 1983) it is possible to outline some directions for research.

In a semiotic conceptual framework children's literature is understood as one component in a polysystem of signs, which maintains a complicated network of relationships with other systems, and whose processes of development are determined by these relations.

When children's literature is understood as such, one can inquire into children's literature in the broadest possible context – into its multi-relationship with social norms, literary norms and educational norms, and analyze how texts for children are a product of this complicated net of relationships. Furthermore, one can examine how texts for children in turn shape societal ideals and ideas and take part in transforming them into new patterns.

Issues of a very broad nature can be raised, such as, who is culturally responsible for children's literature as a literary product of society; or how is it possible to understand the behavior of children's literature as a result of various cultural constraints; or what is the particular cultural context in which children's literature has developed.

13. In the framework of the semiotics of culture, the equivocal features of children's literature become an object for our research, instead of a catalyst for attempting to change the status of children's literature, as was often the case in the past. Consequently, we can try to understand why children's literature was subordinate to adult literature from its very foundation, which cultural forces dictated this status; and the textual and other implications of the position of children's literature in culture.

Furthermore, we can ask why children's literature is today the only literary system which is perceived by culture as belonging to both the educational and the literary systems at one and the same time? What are the implications of this dual attribution? How does it affect the development, structure, textual options, readers and writers of children's literature? How and to what extent do notions of childhood determine the character of the texts for the child as far as poetic norms are concerned and in regard to the acceptance of such texts by the »people-in-the-culture«? What are the relationships between cultural concepts, images and societal consciousness and the texts produced for the child? How do writers for children react to such societal and poetic demands in producing their texts?

Or we can ask why the governing literary norms of adult literature are transformed at a later stage of development into children's literature. Why does their transformation involve a process of simplification?

The answer to these questions lies partially in the systemic implications of the status of children's literature in culture. Analysis of the cultural position of children's literature reveals that the processes and procedures involved in the production of the children's system are neither random nor static. Research shows that they can be described as having an accountable and recurring pattern, as dynamic processes, governing the history and the development of children's literature since its inception.

In fact, recent research into children's literature has reopened accepted questions, through re-examining accepted tenets of previous research: The question of the emergence of children's literature and the creation of the boundaries between adult and children's literature; the process in which the system of books for children was established; the

question of the link between societal concepts and children's literature, the textual implications of this link and the textual manipulations thereof, were found to be highly complex issues, having a different status than first assumed (to mention just a few examples: Ewers 1988, 1989; Grenz 1990, Hunt 1991, Lypp 1984, Shaner 1992).

14. On the other hand, from the point of view of the semiotics of culture, children's literature presents a range of highly provocative and productive questions, concerning the history of culture and cultural mechanisms. One might even go so far as to say that no other sphere of cultural studies contends with quite such a vast scope of cultural issues as does children's literature. Indeed, historical research into children's literature managed to introduce into the academic world a new corpus which had never previously been dealt with. By inquiring into this new domain, research proved able to shed new light on cultural history. The study of this corpus proved to be of substantial importance for the understanding of cultural life (especially European and American cultural life), including some of its more intimate aspects.

Few, if any, cultural fields have come about as the result of, and despite, quite so many cultural constraints, as children's literature. Consequently, no other field is able to examine cultural mechanisms, manipulations, and procedures in quite the same way as children's literature. Children's literature evolved from the fusion of and interaction among several cultural fields or systems, of which the most prominent were the social, the educational, and the literary systems. Any interest in studying the complexity of such reciprocal cultural relationships, or examining the mechanisms and dynamics thereof, proves to be rewarded by the study of children's literature, which has recently raised some most promising issues.

15. The few questions to which I have just pointed, do not of course constitute a full program. One of the major tasks of a program for the field will be to outline a new set of questions which would suggest further directions for study and new research options.

The field's current state-of-the-art is characterized by the emergence of a range of new issues and directions to be addressed. How many of these will in fact be attained depends entirely on us as scholars of children's literature. There is, however, a price to pay for being new and untested: the pioneering nature of this new field of study means that current research cannot hope to guarantee to immediate and long-lasting answers. We know that some working hypotheses will fail to be confirmed at all, others will require modification, while still others will enable progress and advancement. As things stand, what we do have to offer is the hope of generating a lively, provocative, and stimulating field of inquiry for the coming decades.

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