Call for Papers

Canon Constitution and Canon Change in Children’s Literature

International Conference at the University of Tübingen, Germany, 11-13 September 2014

Whereas children’s classics and their adaptations and transformations into other media have been widely discussed, the history of canonization processes in children’s literature in general and the development of a canonical theory of children’s literature in particular still need further exploration. Although several scholars have already investigated how national canons of children’s literature have developed, such historical approaches have mostly focused on aesthetic matters or on changing concepts of childhood. The impact of cultural concepts that are constitutive for the construction of cultural identities (so-called social imaginaries) on canon-formation has, on the other hand, been widely neglected. The same applies to a transnational perspective on canon constitution, which transcends national boundaries and instead locates children’s literature in a more comprehensive communicative space. Issues that might be investigated in this respect are the presentation of children’s literature in literary histories, the historical contingency of the status of canonicity, the impact of social institutions and awards on the appreciation of certain types of children’s literature, the possible reasons for excluding or including particular children’s books from/into the canon, the conceptual shifts in the acknowledgement of children’s literature in national canons, the influence of genre preferences for canon constitution and the perception of a canon of children’s literature as a transnational phenomenon.

The purpose of this international conference is to bring together scholars of children’s literature from different countries who are especially interested in the topic of canon formation in children’s literature. We particularly invite papers dealing with one or several of the following topics:

- National vs. transnational canons;
- Paul Hazard and the idea of a “World Literature for Children”;
- Divergent canon concepts (Western Canon, European Canon, Global Canon, Multicultural Canon, Postcolonial Canon);
- The concept of the “Golden Age” and its impact on the canon of children’s literature;
• Genre preferences in canonization processes;
• The impact of institutions (e.g. libraries, museums, schools, literary societies, awards) on the development of the canon;
• Canons and social imaginaries;
• Reasons for inclusion or exclusion in literary histories;
• Falling out of the canon: the challenges of forgotten children’s books;
• Interfaces between the canons of children’s and adults’ literature;
• Changing criteria for canonicity.

Contributions from academics interested in the close relationship between historical and theoretical perspectives of canon research in the realm of children’s literature are particularly welcome. The proceedings of the conference will be published in book form.

Deadline for proposals: 31 July 2013.

Please send abstracts of c. 300 words (for a twenty-minute paper) and a short biographical note (c. 100 words) as e-mail attachments (Word format please) to both convenors, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer: bettina.kuemmerling-meibauer@uni-tuebingen.de and Anja Müller: am.englit-si@muelleranja.eu.

Notification whether proposals have been accepted will be made by 31 August 2013.

The conference venue is Schloss Hohentübingen, a beautiful 16th-century castle in the picturesque university town of Tübingen (close to Stuttgart international airport). For details, see <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/museum-schloss/schloss.html>

For further inquiries please contact the conference convenors:

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