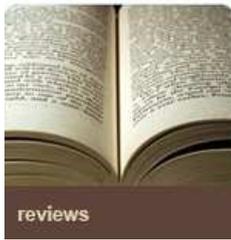




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Astrid Lindgren – Werk und Wirkung. Internationale und interkulturelle Aspekte. [Astrid Lindgren – Works and Effects. International and intercultural aspects.] Edited by Svenja Blume, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Angelika Nix.

Astrid Lindgren – Werk und Wirkung. Internationale und interkulturelle Aspekte. [Astrid Lindgren – Works and Effects. International and intercultural aspects.] Edited by Svenja Blume, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Angelika Nix. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang, 2009. 324 pages. € 52,8 (paperback).

This volume is a collection of sixteen essays that trace the reception of Astrid Lindgren's works both in a Scandinavian and in a broader international (mainly European) context. The articles adopt different scholarly perspectives in order to shed light on this reception. As the editors mention in the introduction, surprisingly little academic attention has been devoted to the international and intercultural reception of Lindgren's works, in spite of the fact that she has been so widely translated, read and studied. The book is divided into four thematic parts. Most of the essays are written in German, with the exception of two contributions in English, by Ulf Boëthius and Eva-Maria Metcalf.

The first part of *Astrid Lindgren – Werk und Wirkung* deals with Lindgren's reception in Scandinavia. Angelika Nix considers *Pippi Longstocking* within the literary context of the "modern breakthrough" or "second Golden Age," which occurred in Swedish children's literature in the mid-1940s. Claus Esmann Andersen starts from Hans Christian Andersen's romantic concept of children's courageous attitude towards death to interpret *The Brothers Lionheart*. Ulf Boëthius considers Pippi Longstocking as a primal orphan figure and analyses this character with respect to the social context in which it was created: the public debate on wild youth and bad children.

The main focus of the contributions in the second and most elaborate part of the book is the translation and international reception of Lindgren's work. Astrid Surmatz focuses on political aspects in the books and antifascist and antiracist interpretations, which she mainly illustrates with examples from the translations of *Pippi Longstocking*. Svenja Blume contrasts the positive reactions to *Pippi* in Sweden, where she was considered to embody the new ideas on "free upbringing," with the negative reception in France, where the book was completely misunderstood and attempts were made to socialize Pippi. Caroline Roeder analyses excerpts from the archives of the DDR Book Licensing Council in order to study the reception of *Pippi Longstocking*, *Mio, my Son*, *Karlsson-on-the-Roof* and *Ronia the Robber's Daughter*. She shows that the council hardly used any literary criteria for the selection of books, but merely took into account the author's and the work's political and ideological ideas. In the next article, Rolf Annas considers the influence of Apartheid and the related cultural context (a time when African books were scarcely read and foreign texts received with open arms) on the distribution of *Pippi Longstocking* amongst different demographic groups in South Africa. In order to explain the popularity of Pippi in the US, Eva-Maria Metcalf confronts her with traditional female heroines, such as *Mary Lennox (The Secret Garden)*, *Anne Shirley (Anne of Green Gables)* and *Judy Abbot (Daddy-Long-Legs)*. Next, Tihomir Engler, Tamara Turza-Bogdan and Krunoslav Mikulan analyse the effect of the political situation and modernisation in the former Yugoslavian republics on the reception of Astrid Lindgren's books. They argue that varied readings of *Pippi Longstocking* (either as entertainment or as a means for social criticism) have allowed for the book to become a fixed part of the national children's canon. Finally, Mare Mürsepp looks into the reasons for the enormous popularity and influence of Lindgren in Estonia.

Part Three is dedicated to the interaction between Lindgren and other well-known children's books authors, resulting in several highly interesting contributions. Gina Weinkauff compares her to the Italian writer Gianni Rodari. Both of them are classic authors, yet only the former succeeded in breaking through in Germany. Weinkauff traces this discrepancy back to the traditional crooked relationship between Northern and Southern Europeans' popularity in Germany—Scandinavian literature is usually received more positively than books from Southern Europe. Kirsten Waterstraat compares different aspects of Lindgren's authorship (such as biography, childhood images, contents and reception) to the Dutch author Annie M.G. Schmidt in order to question the common parallels drawn between the two writers. Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer discusses the huge impact on the concept of picture books that Lindgren and Anna Riwkin-Brick had with their innovative photo books.

In the fourth and final part, Astrid Lindgren's writings are scrutinized from a literary pedagogical perspective. Sonja Müller gives a survey of how German criticism on *Pippi Longstocking* made a spectacular turn in the 1950s as the "Theory of the 'good children's book'" (253) gained ground. In the penultimate essay, Reinert Tabbert studies Lindgren's presence in German schools. Finally, in one of the most appealing essays in this volume, Konstanze Jung refutes the proposition that *Pippi Longstocking* is a racist book by highlighting the underlying social criticism.

Although the volume consists of sixteen different essays, it is not hard to establish a sense of coherence when reading it. The contributors clearly constitute a (mainly German) network of scholars who regularly refer to each other's writings. Interestingly enough, they often depart from a similar starting point but somehow manage to elaborate on the subject in an entirely different way, thus ending up with quite divergent findings. The ideas on education phrased by Bertrand Russell, Ellen Key and A.S. Neill, for example, are often used to prove different points. Another example are Surmatz' and Jung's different approaches to the political (in particular racist) undercurrent in *Pippi Longstocking*. Whereas Surmatz points out that various passages from the books are problematic when viewed from a postcolonial perspective, Jung tries to prove that the books are rather critical of the society in which Lindgren wrote them.

In being so multifaceted, the volume allows for each reader to find something of personal interest—either with regard to method or to contents. The various outcomes invest the collection with a sense of versatility which can be said to mirror Lindgren's own many-sidedness. The overall style used in this volume is a highly academic German and some of the contributions prove to be rather difficult to read. It is therefore not easily accessible for the uninformed reader, but it is certainly a must-read for any scholar interested in the international impact of Astrid Lindgren's authorship. Moreover, *Astrid Lindgren – Werk und Wirkung* introduces the reader to perspectives on children's literature in a variety of countries, and offers useful tools for studying the reception of other authors in an international context.

Sara Van den Bossche
Ghent University, Belgium

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