

Sissy Helff and Nadia Butt, eds. *'Tantalizing Alice.'* Approaches, Concepts and Case Studies in Adaptations of a Classic. Trier: WVT, 2016. 210 pp.

Case Studies! The bane of Adaptation Studies are ever-more comparisons between an 'original' and its adaptation. Conference worst case scenario: a novel no one in the audience has read or heard of and a film no one has seen and no one cares to ever see after the talk! Boredom spreads like mildew. – Adaptation Studies are such an important avenue of research because of the ubiquitous and protean modes of cultural, intermedial and transmedial processing of characters, narratives and story-worlds. Adaptation is the mode of semiosis in a media-convergent culture both in a technical sense as well as in terms of content. It occurs also within only one medium but more often it creates multimedia rhizomes. Bygone are the days of fidelity-discourse governed typologies weighing the value of an adaptation on the scale of how close it stays to the hallowed original. Grateful, therefore, we have to be for books like *'Tantalizing Alice'*! Sissy Helff and Nadia Butt have edited a book (and not conference proceedings) in which they have collected contributions most of which focus not on Lewis Carroll's works or only one individual adaptation but rather on genres or specific media and the mediating processes. This most laudable approach has method! The subtitle of the volume promises "Approaches, Concepts and Case-Studies," and the latter are neatly encased in the methodological wrapping of the approaches and concepts and concentrate on distinctive and symptomatic cases which deserve the attention directed to them. The only thing which would make the volume more of a book than a collection would have been to have the articles refer to each other as well.

The editors' introduction to the volume, alas, is all too brief to do more than merely point out some of the developments in the not entirely remote past. Helff and Butt see the mid-90s of the past century as the turning point in Adaptation Studies where scholars started opening up their field of research beyond book-film relations. Whether or not Adaptation Studies have become a discipline in their own right as Richard Hand and Katja Krebs (self-interestedly) claimed in 2008 deserves a more scrutinizing look – and a definition or at least a discussion of the parameters employed in accordance to which a field of research becomes a discipline. The introduction would have profited much from being updated and enlarged in methodological terms. This is a chance missed in this book particularly because the proper introduction to the topic, tantalizing Alice, is provided by the habitually magisterial Tom Leitch. Thus, the editors wisely do not waste their energies on giving the topic more than just a paragraph and rather concentrate on methodological reflexion but provide too little of it. Leitch's article is the first and all-encompassing contribution that points out in a most convincing manner that the key to the Alice-phenomenon is the hyper adaptability of the textual corpus of Carroll's work.

The book is divided into three sections: first, "Adaptations, Theories, and the Many Faces of Alice," second, "Reinventing Alice beyond Erotica," and finally, "Alice between Individual Recollection and Collective Memory." The choice of the second subtitle is rather misleading as it suggests that the first section deals with Alice solely within the bounds of Erotica, and it is inconsequential because the first article then is: "Alice's Eroticized Adventures on the Other Side of the Looking Glass" (Anna Kérchy). The first section provides the groundwork with Leitch's article along with one by Andrew J. Gravel on the 1966 BBC production which is epitomical in being so faithful that the director Jonathan Miller had no script but let the dialogues be typed up straight from the book for the next day's shooting. Eckart Voigts looks at the adaptational fact-fiction conundrum of the bio-fiction overgrowth of the Alice-

Carroll complex. The second section focuses rather on the content-side of adaptation by bringing into focus the erotic (Anna Kérchy), death in the American photographic Alice-tradition (Georgiana Banita), Alice as an adult (including her erotization) (Emily R. Aguilo-Perez), and gender (Nadia Butt) in Alice adaptations. The third section has more of a mediality bias in looking at cartoons (Nicole Richter), memory (Hugh H. Davies), comics (Eva Jungbluth), the circus (Doyle Ott) and computer games (Katharina E. Kinder-Kurlanda). The variety of approaches is impressive and the inclusion of the article by Ott, who is also a practitioner, is a very welcome addition.

Of the authors, except for Leitch and Voigts, no one belongs to the usual suspects from the Adaptation Studies scene and none is an outright canonical Lewis Carroll specialist. Being neither an adaptationist nor a Carrollean might help to have a fresh view on the material and not get lost in all too detailed laborious methodological discussions or the politics of Carroll exegesis: Leitch offers invigorating ideas in the first field and Voigts, though rather not known for a long-standing interest in Carroll's work, gives an impressive historical and systematic overview of the feuds in the traditional Carroll literature over the author's degree and alleged paedophilia. The other authors bring their specialised knowledge into their research which – looking e.g. at computer games or graphic novels or gender topics – is almost always interdisciplinary with regard to adaptations. Trans- or intermediality always means the crossing of a border, which is also a crossing of disciplinary borders. The versatility required for this kind of border-crossing mobility is the most important qualification for authorship in this volume. So, both sides will be happy: the adaptationists will approve of the enterprise because of its methodological proficiency and scholars specializing in Carroll will find a compendium of the multi-media afterlife of their heroine.

PASCAL NICKLAS

Albrecht Classen and Eva Parra-Membrives, eds. *Bestseller – gestern und heute: Ein Blick vom Rand zum Zentrum der Literaturwissenschaft / Bestseller – Yesterday and Today: A Look from the Margin to the Center of Literary Studies*. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2016. 231 pp.

When a text becomes a bestseller one can frequently observe a remarkable development: as its popular success grows, media coverage builds up and sales go through the roof, so in turn does academic interest in the text wane. For many proponents of the discipline success seems to undermine the literary and aesthetic integrity of the literary work. Mass appeal and success carries with it something odious. The frown with which academia traditionally regards bestsellers is well anticipated in this collection of 14 essays dealing with bestselling books from the past and the present. Albrecht Classen's introduction reads very much as a justification if not in passages as an apology for turning towards these texts which stand in the limelight of public attention and yet often remain outside academic consideration. Repeatedly he defends bestsellers against their equation with popular and low culture: "the global equation of bestsellers with triviality would be dangerously erroneous. Many bestsellers have certainly been of low literary or aesthetic quality; but others have been fully recognised as remarkable and profound works that shed much light on human existence, both past and present" (25). In fact, he lists a long line of bestselling texts which would stand the test of time even in the most demanding literary canon.

Maybe the situation is not quite as prejudiced as one is made to believe. Cultural studies have opened the discipline for texts which in the past would hardly have had a