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*Les pouvoirs de la littérature de jeunesse (The Powers of Children's Literature)* ed. by Kodjo Attikpoé (review)

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Children's Literature Association Quarterly, Volume 45, Number 1, Spring 2020, pp. 98-99 (Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.2020.0012>



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*Les pouvoirs de la littérature de jeunesse (The Powers of Children's Literature)*. Edited by Kodjo Attikpoé. Peter Lang, 2018.

Reviewed by Anne Cirella-Urrutia

This collection of essays edited by Kodjo Attikpoé, a specialist in Francophone literatures, is drawn from a symposium under the same title held at the University of Ottawa 31 May–3 June 2015, organized by the Association des Professeurs de Français des Universités et Collèges Canadiens (APFUCC). Divided into three major sections, the volume gathers twelve articles that aim to explain the role of children's literature, its thematic diversity, and its reception. This volume yields promising directions for the study of the genre, as the twelve contributions address picturebooks, novels, and children's drama, and raise the following pressing issues: What characterizes a book for children? What types of readers does it target? Which stylistic forms may it encompass? How do we value children's books and why? Is it high literature? Does it purely entertain the child or does it teach existential lessons where the child needs to be engaged? Who are the protagonists and how do they address questions of gender and race? What is human nature? What is inhuman?

The first section, "Explorer les méandres du social," is the major one and includes five contributions examining unrelenting themes that instill into the young reader a sense of social awareness regarding such topics as domestic violence, rebellion, abandonment, social injustice, forced migration, and

child exploitation. Monique Noël-Gaudreault discusses the sociorealistic function of children's literature with the trilogy of novels by Quebecois author Michel Noël. Laurianne Perzo focuses on children's drama specifically and how the question of migration is reflected in plays written in French since 2000. Her analysis of the theme of border migration between Israel and Palestine in Daniel Danis's *Sous un ciel de chamaille* (1997) is outstanding and stresses the many forced rites of passage endured by male and female protagonists. Anne Schneider examines further characterization and the female heroine with historical female figures, Maghrebi girls, and female explorers/adventurers. Adeline Cauté studies two social realistic novels by Haitian author Maryse Condé: *Haïti chérie* (1991) and *À la courbe du Joliba* (2006). Both novels depict civil war and its effect on families as the heroines are subjected to multiple acts of violence because of their color and their social status (69). Attikpoé concludes this section with the study of the child as evil character and his victimization by adult characters in such novels as Caya Makhelé's *L'enfant sorcier* (2001) and Gina Dick's *Un drôle de bienfaiteur* (2002).

The second section, "Représentations de la violence," includes four articles that deal with various exemplifications of violence. Indeed, it is capital for children's authors to commemorate the past and to teach historical events. They do so by including the child as narrator and witness of such tragic events in their coming-of-age novels. Johanne Prud'homme studies the representation of "La crise

d'octobre 1970" in three Quebecois novels: *La nuit des cent pas* (2010) by Josée Ouimet, *Mesures de guerre* (2010) by André Marois, and *21 jours en octobre* (2010) by Magali Favre. Josias Semujanga surveys the figure of the African child as soldier in French and English works for young adults. Mostly, he discusses two types of narration: the child/soldier who repents and the child/soldier who is a victim of the absurdity of the war. In *L'Ainé des orphelins* (2000), Tierno Monémembo uses the child/narrator Faustin Nsenghimana to tell of the tribulations of the Batutsi people during the genocide in Rwanda. Most of these works employ tragicomic stylistic modes to account for the grotesquerie of war and to minimize its pathos. Thaïs Bihour's article deals with the mobilization of children during the First World War and how they are either victimized or invested with the promise of a generational renewal. *Histoire du Petit Chaperon Rouge* (1917), presented in the same context by Charles Moreau-Vauthier and Guy Arnoux, expresses this idea with the wolf dressed up as a German officer. Anne Sechin and Antoine Cantin-Brault close this section with the study of the dystopian Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins (2008–10) and its ethical and political implications in regard to war.

The last section, "Transmission, réception, enjeu," addresses some specificities of children's literature from an international perspective. Anne-Marie Mercier-Faivre and Michèle Lusetti analyze the picturebook *Toujours devant* (2003) by Christian Bruel and compare the readings and inter-

pretations drawn from two groups of six-to-ten-year-olds from two elementary schools in Lyon, France (167–68). Their findings demonstrate the complexities of the structure of the book and its stylistic challenges, what Bruel justly names "une lecture sportive" (162). Khalid Rizk surveys major Arabic youth magazines from the Maghreb and the Middle East, and their conceptualization into several categories of knowledge. He emphasizes both their strengths and their shortcomings. Wen Zhang evaluates three translated Chinese versions of *La belle au bois dormant* by Sun (1915), Ni and Wang (1981), and Lin (2013). In comparing these three versions of the story, she highlights their distinctive ideological, literary, and economic influences and their reception among Chinese children.

Overall, the contributions to this collection stress the didactic and aesthetic specificities of children's literature as well as the value of the genre. This volume is a great addition for students and specialists in comparative literature, French and Francophone literatures, and children's literature.

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