

Responsibility and the law on children's publishing in France: Hachette and the case of the revisions to Jules Verne c. 1955-1965

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Children's publishing is one of the sectors of the industry where the need for responsibility is felt most keenly. 'Books offer children a way of exploring and understanding the world', as artist Quentin Blake put it. Consequently, books for the young are amongst the most adapted and modified (Gouanvic, 2014).

This paper proposes the case of France to provide historical perspectives on attempts to encourage 'responsibility' in the industry, and the ways this can influence both content and approaches to making books. France is unusual in having formalised the notion of 'responsibility' in the Law No 49-956 of 16 July 1949 on publications for children. Written in the aftermath of war, and in the emerging Cold War, it has sought to fix the boundaries of children's reading matter ever since.

This paper uses the records of the new regulatory body established by the law, and the editorial files preserved by Hachette, the largest children's publisher in France in the 1950s and 60s, and wider discourses on children's media consumption, to show how the perspectives of regulator and publisher were sometimes competing, but always in dialogue. It focuses on Hachette's controversial modernisation of Jules Verne's oeuvre, as an example of the collaboration and conflicts between critics, campaigners, and publishers on making old content conform to new values. Seeing 'censors' as readers, reviewers and even co-authors, my paper argues the Verne revisions were a radical, iterative, and creative process. The revisions were as much about working out what the new limits were, where they lay and testing how far they could be pushed as they were about enforcing them, and ultimately trying to understand what 'modern' books for children could and should be.

Gouanvic, Jean-Marc *Sociologie de l'adaptation et de la traduction. Le roman d'aventures anglo-américain dans l'espace littéraire français pour les jeunes (1826–1960)* Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014.

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