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Reading rororo rotfuchs throughout Europe

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The Series

- ▶ founded in 1972 (still exists)
- ▶ the red fox: mascot and symbol
 - ▷ red → left wing
 - ▷ fox → sly, cheeky, smart, and friendly
- ▶ original concept
 - ▷ anti-authoritarian content
 - ▷ social criticism
 - ▷ empowerment for children
- ▶ series editors
 - ▷ Uwe Wandrey (1972–80), active in the “Kinderladen movement”
 - ▷ Renate Boldt and Gisela Krahl (1980–92)
- ▶ high print runs
 - ▷ typical 1970s *rotfuchs* first print run: 15,000

| Month/Year | Total Print Run |
|----------------|-----------------|
| June 1973 | 675,000 |
| February 1974 | 1,000,000 |
| May 1974 | 1,350,000 |
| October 1974 | 2,000,000 |
| February 1975 | 2,300,000 |
| July 1976 | 2,800,000 |
| April 1977 | > 3,000,000 |
| September 1977 | > 3,500,000 |
| January 1979 | 4,200,000 |
| March 1982 | 8,000,000 |
| 1983 | 8,500,000 |
| 1992 | 21,000,000 |
| 1997 | 30,000,000 |

[Table 1]

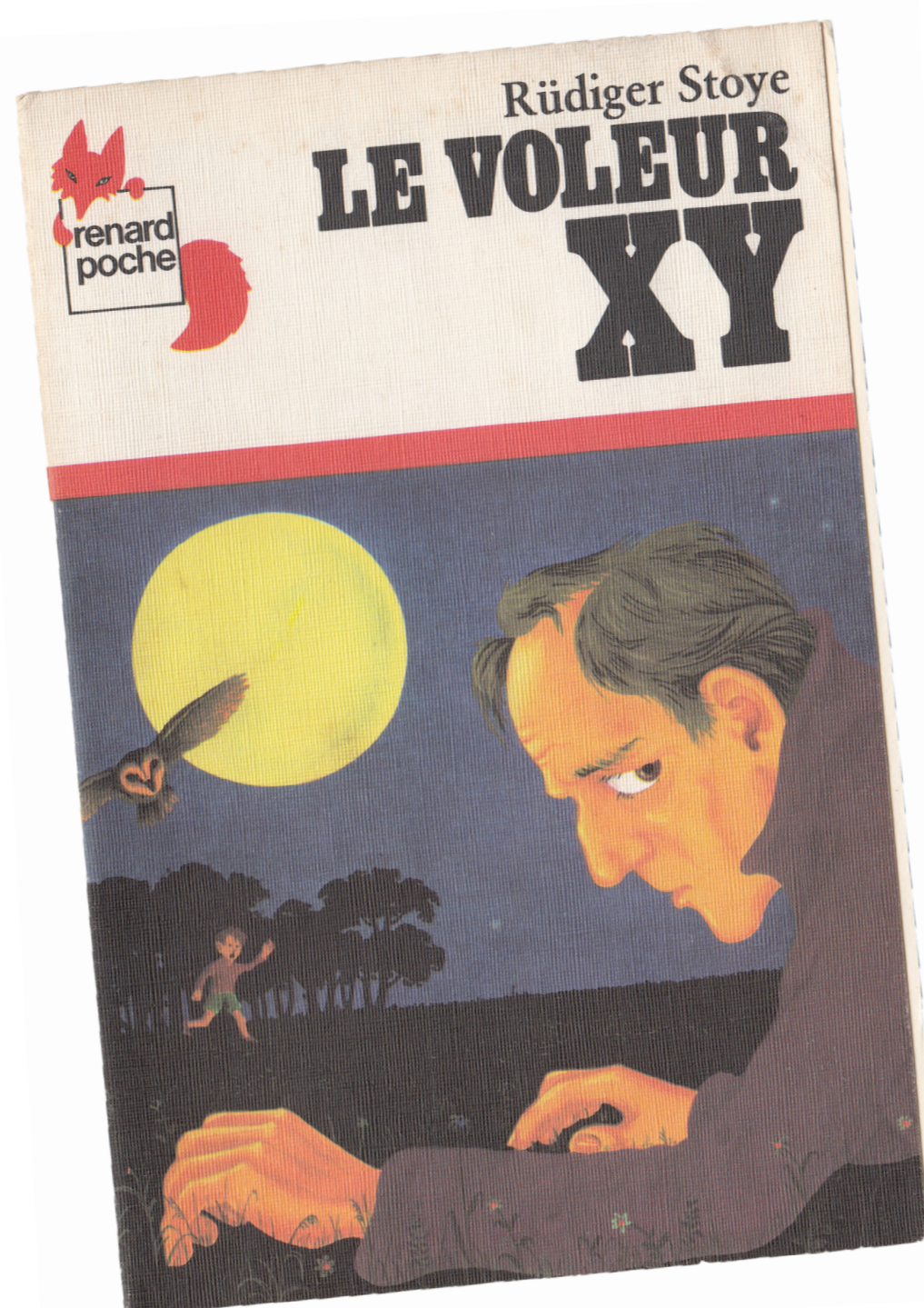
- ▶ large and diverse audiences
 - ▷ loyalty program: *rotfuchs* Club 1973–78;
 - ▷ 32,000 members when it was discontinued
- ▶ mixed reception
 - ▷ critical acclaim from pedagogical reform movement (left wing)
 - ▷ criticism from right wing/conservatives

Some Implications

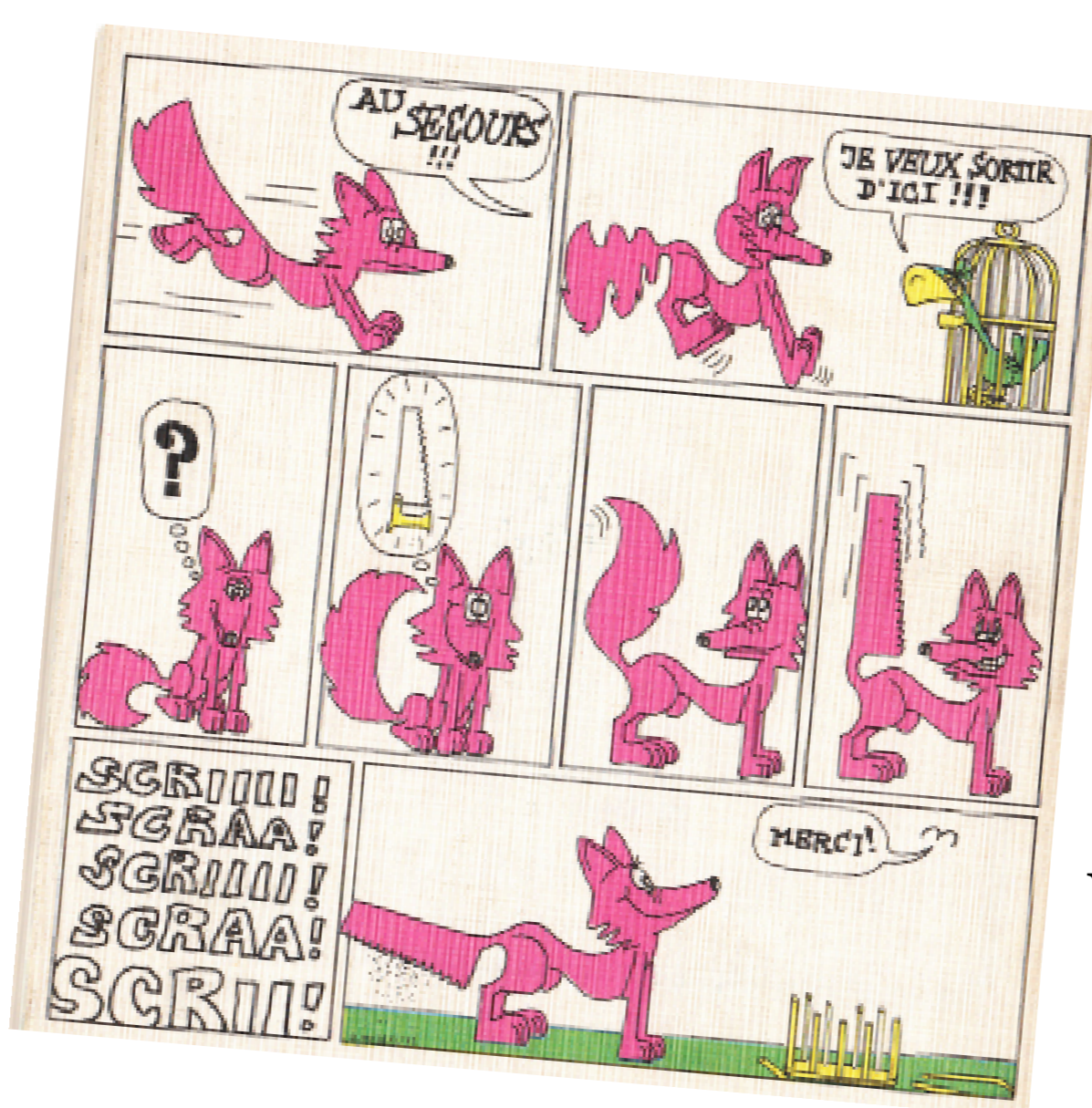
- ▶ analysis (method: social history of literature/bibliometrics) shows that *rotfuchs* had long-term success in mass print runs
 - ▷ series influenced German children’s and YA literature
 - ▷ particular success of *rotfuchs* content in Scandinavia in schools and other series
- ▶ working hypothesis: close connection with social and pedagogical reform movement necessary for success



[Fig. 1]



[Figs. 2a/b]



[Fig. 3]

Throughout Europe

In France, the Netherlands and Denmark, parts of the series were taken over.

- ▶ France: *renard poche* (L'École des Loisirs, 1975–82)
 - ▷ some content; at first, cartoons and logo [figs. 2a/b] (later replaced by Philippe Dumas’ work)
 - ▷ «Des livres de poche qui soient aussi des livres de luxe, est-ce possible? Avec Renard-Poche, l'École des Loisirs semble avoir approché la réussite. Lorsqu'il faut mettre entre les mains d'enfants des textes de qualité, ou de grands illustrateurs, se pose tout de suite le problème du prix; c'est un faux problème: on peut faire bien et pas cher.» (*Communication et langages*, 1/1978)
- ▶ The Netherlands: *vossenreeks* (Van Holkema & Warendorf, 1974)
 - ▷ 100% *rotfuchs* content, but only six books overall
 - ▷ logo different, cartoons the same
- ▶ Denmark: *Tellerups Rævebøger* (Tellerup, 1984/85)
 - ▷ cartoons as “Rævestreger” [fig. 3]

A “package deal” of picture books was planned for Japan. However, this was not realized due to technical difficulties. Other than these “package deals”, dozens of original *rotfuchs* books were sold as licenses, in particular to Denmark. German-language versions including vocabulary for school children were popular as well.

Sources/Literature

- ▶ Sources: Mainz Publishing Archives, founded 2009 (including large portions of Rowohlt’s archival records)
- ▶ Literature: Bernstein, Eckhard. “From Struwwelpeter to Rotfuchs: Suggestions for Using Children’s Books in Culture Classes.” *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German* 9.1 (Spring 1976): 96–100; Norrick-Rühl, Corinna. *panther, rotfuchs & Co.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014 (MSBW. 24); Zipes, Jack. “Down with Heidi, Down with Struwwelpeter, Three Cheers for the Revolution. Towards a New Socialist Children’s Literature in West Germany.” *Children’s Literature* 5.1 (1976): 162–80.
- ▶ Image copyrights: Rowohlt Verlag; Jan P. Schniebel