

Editorial

Humour encompasses various dimensions and facets—from slapstick to wordplay to subtle irony. Literary texts and media for children and young adults can generate humour using different strategies. Readers of different ages often laugh at entirely different points, because whether something is perceived as funny or not depends not only on personal taste but also on experiential knowledge of patterns, structures and references. What, for example, is funny about Wednesday Addams in Tim Burton’s TV series *Wednesday* (USA 2022) releasing two plastic bags full of piranhas into the swimming pool where the aspiring athletes of Nancy Reagan High School are training? The answer is obvious in this series, which delights in playing with death and violence. But not only black humour needs a specific setting to invite transgression and rule-breaking; the same applies to gentler and thus ostensibly more »child-friendly« varieties of humour in the work of such authors as Astrid Lindgren, Dr Seuss, Otfried Preußler, James Krüss, Goscinny and Sempé or Michael Ende. Childhood, in their texts, is a carefree form of existence, in contrast to a fundamentally serious adult one. Today childhood and youth are imagined differently. The spectrum of comic procedures that are used ranges from exploring the comic potential in everyday life – in slapstick and character comedy – to language games and nonsense, to black humour’s play with the absurd and the grotesque. It is thus all the more surprising that current research on children’s literature and media pays only scant attention to the techniques of comedy and the emotional effects of humour. Newer theories of humour, and how children’s literature and media research can profit from them, have not yet been seriously addressed.

The current, eighth volume of the open-access, peer-reviewed *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Kinder- und Jugendliteraturforschung / GKJF* (Yearbook of the German Children’s Literature Research Society) addresses contemporary as well as historical dimensions of humour in children’s and young adult literature and media, especially poetological and aesthetic aspects. The articles explore the manifold implications of this complex topic in its various narrative and medial forms (picturebooks, Manga, cartoons) from both theoretical and aesthetic perspectives. The volume contains eight contributions from six different countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Belgium and Italy), illustrating the international character of the yearbook, that is also reflected in the diversity of the subjects addressed.

In her key article, **Emer O’Sullivan** presents the central functions of humour based on the most important and influential theories. She explores the question of whether humorous children’s literature, with its distinct techniques, themes and functions, needs its own theory. Drawing on examples from children’s books in English and German, the article concludes with a brief discussion of the culturally-specific transmission of certain forms of humour and comedy.

Deborah Keller examines the children’s stories of the Swiss author Meinrad Lienert (1865–1933) and their inherent poetics of humour. The stories are analysed from a narratological perspective, and the article draws on various humour theories, with a particular focus on the stories’ ambiguous address and its effect on their ensuing publication and reception history.

Hilde Dybvik and **Inga Henriette Undheim** investigate a selection of Scandinavian children’s books published since the 1970s to ask how and why humour is used when presenting adult sexuality in books for children. They categorise strategies of humour

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and problematise how the strategic use of humour might contribute to perpetuating heteronormative notions and patterns.

The animated series *Tom and Jerry* is at the centre of **Kristina Höch's** article, in which she probes the central acts of violence universally taken to be comical, with special focus on how the humour of violence is generated by audiovisual codes and narrative structures.

David Lenn Liebenthal examines specific forms of gender transgression in three contemporary Shōjo Mangas, a subgenre of Japanese comics, in German translation. The genre of romantic comedy serves as a connecting element, and Liebenthal shows how Shōjo Manga, in particular, has an inherently ambivalent approach to cross-dressing and gender-bending as comic categories.

Elisabeth von Leon looks at two picturebooks, *Spinne spielt Klavier* and *Wie man bis Eins zählt*, nominated for the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis (German state award for children's books) in 2023, drawing on the contextualist position to highlight the participatory character of funny novelty picturebooks. Beyond the focus theme, two articles explore questions of children's and young adult literature and media from a historical or theoretical perspective. **Larissa Jagdschian** examines urban spatial constructions in well-known works of German children's exile literature, showing how experiences of homelessness and deterritoriality are narrated and semantically framed through topographical references and patterns. In an empirical study, **Leander Duthoy** surveyed readers aged 9 to 75 about their favourite characters in the children's novel *Iep!* (1996) by Joke van Leeuwen, and the characters they disliked, with the aim of exploring age-specific differences in the preference for literary characters.

Reviews of publications undertaken by members of the German Children's Literature Research Society present and discuss current research on children's and young adult literature and media.

A special thanks to those who played a part in the production of this *Yearbook*, first and foremost to Christine Lötscher and Emer O'Sullivan, who are now leaving the editorial board. Christine Lötscher's important contribution to the Yearbook lay in her dedication to reviews, her expert knowledge of the latest theoretical developments, and her precise eye for textual details. Emer O'Sullivan was instrumental in shaping the *Yearbook* in its new digital format, which found its current form as an online publication through her hard work. Above and beyond that, she did invaluable work in her thorough managing and editing of international contributions. Many heartfelt thanks! We welcome Thomas Boyken and Lena Hoffmann as new members of the editorial team beginning with *Yearbook 2025*. We thank our authors whose work has given *Yearbook 2024* a nicely versatile look; we thank the peer reviewers for meticulously checking and commenting on the articles. Our special thanks go to the team Aleta-Amirée von Holzen and Petra Schrackmann from the Swiss Institute for Children's and Youth Media (SIKJM) in Zurich, who coordinated the reviews in this volume with great care and circumspection. We would also like to express our sincere thanks to Anika Ullmann, who once again has been instrumental in helping the editors set up the articles in the Open Journal System.

We wish all our readers an entertaining read and continuing discussions on humorous children's and young adult media.

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