

Editorial 2025

»They bring horror to the perfect family world: smiling innocently, they kick a hole in the thin veneer of civilisation with their little feet.« This is how the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* summarises the horror emanating from a powerful character: the uncanny child. The uncanny has been closely associated with different literary motifs and characters at least since Freud, but in addition to psychoanalytical readings of texts, scholars have to consider more recent developments and methods that focus in particular on children's and young people's media.

The ninth year of the open-access, peer-reviewed *Yearbook of the German Children's Literature Research Society* takes the character of the uncanny child as its starting point in order to enquire into figurations and methods of the uncanny in children's and young adult literature and media. How do texts play with taboos? How do they (re)design concepts of childhood when childlike characters no longer have the aura of innocence – as in the tradition of Romantic notions of childhood? Along with images of childhood, it is also important to examine constructions of youth.

The uncanny comes in very different guises, for example the monstrous is a traditional topos of children's and young adult literature. This raises questions about the forms of gothic and horror literature and thus about the target group-oriented specifics of the genres. How is the uncanny evoked in picturebooks, novels, films, series and video games and how do these media influence each other? Can more recent approaches in literary research on emotions be productively incorporated to describe the reception of the uncanny? To what extent might concepts of gender be linked to the construction of the uncanny and the monstrous?

This edition of the *Yearbook of the German Children's Literature Research Society* is dedicated to the uncanny in all its diversity and demonstrates how it is negotiated and developed in various media – from radio plays to novels and comics to films and computer games. The contributions address the topic from various theoretical perspectives, often with reference to the ideas of Sigmund Freud.

Julia Lückl focuses on the adaptations of Neil Gaiman's children's novel *Coraline* and analyses how the motif of the (un)dead mother's hands, beyond psychoanalytical interpretations, becomes effective as an aesthetic moment of physicality and threat.

Vera Cuntz-Leng's research also investigates the field of film, wherein she employs film analysis to examine representations of the uncanny child. She examines Philip Ridley's film *The Reflecting Skin* and draws parallels with Kathryn Bond Stockton's conceptualisation of the queer child and Lee Edelman's reflections on reproductive futurism.

Sabrina Dunja Schneider explores the grotesque as an interface between comedy and the uncanny in Walter Moers' *Wilde Reise durch die Nacht* (*Wild Journey Through the Night*). She demonstrates how artistic autonomy and market logic can be ironically questioned through the interplay of text and image.

In their co-authored contribution, **Lea Merle Bachmann** and **Hebah Uddin** analyse the video game *Omori* as an example of a new form of psychological horror in which uncanny spaces function as metaphorical landscapes of psychological suffering and enable an empathetic engagement with mental health.

Hartmut Hombrecher examines the radio play series *Bibi Blocksberg* and uses diachronic analysis to show that uncanny elements have been part of the narrative cosmos from the beginning of the series. Initially a means to express ideological critique, these

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elements were more and more used to generate suspense. In recent episodes they have nearly vanished.

In his analysis of Frida Nilsson's *Lindormars land* **Ben Dammers** demonstrates how the uncanny emerges through the spatial structure of the diegesis. Drawing upon the theories of Freud, Lacan and Derrida, the author explores the formation of the narrative in Nilsson's work, with a particular look on fluid transitions.

The contributions share an interest in how the uncanny is made productive in children's and youth media and in media that depict childhood and youth. The uncanny is regarded as an aesthetic strategy, a space for reflection on cultural norms and a field for experimenting with narrative possibilities. In addition to the main topic, there are also open contributions on children's and young adult literature and media from both a historical and theoretical perspective.

In his contribution, **Andre Kagelmann** examines the transformation processes that took place in the wake of the »Wende« after 1989 and how these are portrayed in contemporary literature. His research encompasses the periodisation of the so-called »baseball bat years« (Baseballschlägerjahre). **Caroline Roeder's** article is concerned with specific transformation processes during the same period. Her analysis highlights the representation and function of shame.

In her contribution on Carl Dantz's novel *Peter Stoll*, **Anika Guse** focuses on the medial portrayal of child labour. This study focuses on the various forms of strolling, with particular attention being paid to aspects such as speed and spatial perception. Additionally, the relationship between strolling and the world of commodities and consumption is considered.

Following approaches from the medical humanities, **Dariya Manova** examines the representation and functionalisation of dementia in the novel *Zeitzuflucht* by Bulgarian author Georgi Gospodinov and in Zoran Drvenkar's *Kai zieht in den Krieg und kommt mit Opa zurück*. Furthermore, she contextualises her reflections on these texts in an overview of the history of dementia and Alzheimer's in German-language children's and young adult literature over the past 30 years.

Based on a post-migrant reading of the Norwegian young adult novel *Ey hör mall!*, **Judith Leiß** tests a methodological approach that understands the post-migrant as a possibility for reflexive interpretation. She therefore supplements her analysis with a reflexive level – set in italics – that is influenced by the novel itself and is decidedly located on the borderline of literary writing.

In her contribution, **Theresia Dingelmaier** engages with Maria Lypp's seminal study on simplicity (Einfachheit) in children's literature, proposing an extension of this notion in the form of a ›playful simplicity‹. This ›playful simplicity‹ is conceptualised as constitutive for children's literature.

For this year's edition reviews were once again submitted by GKJF members, discussing specialist literature mainly from the past year, presenting current theoretical issues and reflecting on the latest research.

As always, special thanks go to the numerous contributors to this publication. Firstly, the authors are to be commended for their contributions, which have resulted in the 2025 Yearbook becoming an inspiring tapestry of theory and analysis, in addition to opening up new scientific horizons. We would also like to thank the peer reviewers for their meticulous examination and commentary on the contributions. Furthermore, we would

like to express our sincere gratitude to Petra Schrackmann and Aleta-Amirée von Holzen from the *Schweizerisches Institut für Kinder- und Jugendmedien* (SIKJM) in Zurich, who once again coordinated the reviews with great care and diligence. We would also like to express our sincere thanks to Anika Ullmann, who, as every year, provided the editors with invaluable support in setting up the contributions with Open Journal Systems. The editors hope to provide stimulating and, it is to be hoped, not too scary reading material, as well as further discussion of sinister characters in children's and youth media.

Berlin, Oldenburg, Cologne, Bielefeld, Leipzig, autumn 2025

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LENA HOFFMANN, ANNA STEMMANN**