

# Editorial

Since Donald Trump made the microblogging service *Twitter* the central communication medium of his policies, there has been constant talk of »fake news« and »alternative facts.« Whether we actually live in a »post-truth age« today is an open question, but there is no doubt that playing with fact and fiction has reached a new level of staging and stylisation in the media.

The case is somewhat different for literature, as a fictional text is precisely defined by the feature that it does not claim to be verifiable in extralinguistic reality. Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously declared in 1817 that »a willing suspension of disbelief« was the prerequisite for reading and understanding a literary text. But what can the fictional contract between author and reader be, for example, if the *histoire* of a narrative contains explicit or implicit falsehoods, or an unreliable narrative instance exists on the level of the *discours*? How do recipients deal with literary and medial illusions and lies?

The question of the relation between fact and fiction is equally relevant for information books, as each view of the world and the things in it is selective and from a specific perspective. Where are the boundaries between truth and invention, between the factual and the fictional? How far can the reduction of complexity in information books for children go before the simplification becomes a distortion, a deception?

The seven articles on the focus theme »Fact, Fake and Fiction« in this third *Yearbook of the German Children's Literature Research Society* address implications of the topic in its various medial forms from both a theoretical and material perspective. The analyses focus on examples from information books for children and young adults, diaries, comics and young adult novels.

Beyond the focus theme and in line with the concept of the *Yearbook*, fundamental theoretical and historical articles deal with questions of children's literature. In this edition, four articles present current research avenues and perspectives.

## Content

The thematic section of this edition of the *Yearbook* opens with contributions on the fictionality of the information (picture) book, starting with Nikola von Merveldt's article on the poetics of nonfiction for children and young adults. Focussing especially on hybrid forms, and based on current narratological research, it develops a typology of different variations of the »fictionality of the factual« and the »factuality of the fictional« in current information books for young readers. Sandra Siewert focusses on emotional approaches to extralinguistic reality as a result of fictional narration in the information picturebook. She uses an example to develop the thesis that the integration of fictional narrative elements – such as child figures – into factual contexts increases empathy and understanding for others among young recipients, as well as expanding their perception of extralinguistic reality.

Historically situated comics and graphic novels also exhibit fictionalisation and factualisation strategies. With the question »Entertaining and/or Incomprehensible?«, Ines Heiser focusses in particular on the relationship between written and pictorial narrative in these multimodal books, and contests the general assumption that images make it easier for child readers to understand what they have read. Using three comic books on Roman history, she demonstrates how written and pictorial narratives differ, and how the pictorial narrative can be an ironic take on the written narrative, thus making the

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task of decoding more challenging. *The Diary of Anne Frank* has been widely published in many different editions; Farriba Schulz engages with the graphic novel by Ari Folman and David Polonsky published in 2017, at a time in which memory theories, the ethics and aesthetics of remembrance had long been the subject of diverse debates, and new medial and artistic approaches to reimagination of the past were being tried out. By translating the diary entries into graphic form, both with intermedial references to historical material and with imaginative approaches, the artists move in text and image, word and symbol, between factual and fictional narrative. The article discusses the potential of this graphic novel as literature-supported memory within education about the Holocaust.

Agnes Bidmon explores the forms and functions of the contemporary trend of docu-fictional narration, focussing on two young adult novels by Dirk Reinhardt. She sees this trend as a reflected way of dealing with the concept of reality in a virtual and digital world. The novels try to reconstruct ›a real reality‹ by using documentary as well as fictional strategies while, at the same time, revealing it to be a construct. This form of narration between entertainment and information offers young readers the opportunity to develop their media and discourse competencies.

Nadine Bieker offers a close reading of the author Tamara Bach and her novel *Marienbilder* (2014). The plural in the title and the characterisation of the text as »a novel in five possibilities« signals the constructed nature of its plot. Bieker analyses how the ontological uncertainty that permeates the entire novel is achieved and reveals the specific aesthetics of the novel; its only ›fact‹ is that in the narrated world, just as in the ›real‹ world, appearance rather than being, and fake rather than fact, dominate.

The mask and the secret – either kept or revealed – can be seen as forms of social interaction in the field of fact, fake and fiction. Aleta-Amirée von Holzen discusses this in the context of the double identity of the Marvel Comic superheroes Spider-Man/Peter Parker and Nova/Rich Rider, arguing that stories about masked heroes tend to implicitly address matters of identity. She interprets these popular figures situated between masking and deception on the one hand and their secret being revealed on the other with reference to central identity theories of the later twentieth century.

The comparative contribution by Ben Wilhelmy, which introduces the section »History and Theory,« is also closely related to the focus theme. It addresses the fictitious language of anthropomorphised insects in Carson Ellis's picturebook *Du Iz Tak?* (2016), which, although invented, was translated into German and Dutch. The translations, which seemed inevitable to the author and publisher due to the structural and phonetic references to natural language, are regarded by Wilhelmy as a breaching experiment in picturebook translation. He explores the challenges analytically and theoretically, particularly with regard to intermodality and polyvalence, showing the translational shifts that are brought about by the notion of the single address in children's literature.

In an article on book history, Sebastian Schmideler examines the production of books for children and youths by the Berlin publishing house Carl Friedrich Amelang in the early nineteenth century, reflecting strategies of production and distribution, the materiality of books and their reception. He pays special attention to the importance of illus-

trations, certain book styles and authors, and finally shows how this publishing house continued the tradition of eighteenth-century children's literature, while modernising it with new genres.

The period around 1900 is the focus of the article in English by Patricia Anne Simpson, in which she turns her attention to German children's literature of the time, set in (pseudo)colonial territories. Her critical reading of a children's story about a fictitious jungle adventure reveals the strategies used to include the child in the colonial experience and the imperial order. The representation of German childhood in a colonial environment thus plays a role in the construction of racial identities. Acts of reading and scenes of instruction intersect with material objects to convey a pedagogy of race dominated by learned whiteness. The question that she addresses is: How does German children's fiction around 1900 reconfigure national identity as imperial experience?

The characterisation of literary figures and narrative structures are also shaped by age concepts, and these play a role in how children's literary criticism and research construct the recipients of this specific literary communication and evaluate literary works and their messages. In the final contribution, Julia Benner and Anika Ullmann point out the relevance of research in Age Studies and Childhood Studies for children's literature research and theory, present selected approaches and posit that findings in these areas should be integrated into the analysis of children's literature. Following Judith Butler's reflections on the performativity of gender, they summarise their remarks under the heading »Doing Age.« The key is to regard age as an identity category and a form of performativity. Children's literature, in this conceptualisation, is at the forefront as a repository for and discursive producer of socially and culturally sanctioned ways ›to do‹ childhood (and other age roles). This fundamental consideration could also make children's literature research interesting for Age Studies and Childhood Studies.

The current *Yearbook* would not have been possible without the help and support of many. Our thanks go, first of all, to all our contributors for their articles. We are also very grateful to the peer reviewers for carefully checking and commenting on contributions. Thanks go to Agnes Blümer, Lena Hoffmann and Oxane Leingang; their continued valuable support ensures the extent and quality of the book review section. And finally to Simone Fischer, whom we not only thank for the design, once again, of a cover fitting for the focus theme, but also for her fine-tuned typography and overall design.

We wish all *Yearbook* readers an inspiring and enjoyable read. We would be delighted to receive your feedback and encourage you to contribute to future issues of the *Yearbook* with articles of your own.

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