

Editorial

Dwindling biodiversity, global warming, changing relationships between humans and animals, plants and landscapes have been central themes in children's and young adult literature and media for some years. Information (picture)books aim to raise awareness of the beauty and diversity of life in forests, in the depths of the sea, and on the edges of cities, sometimes in aesthetically advanced ways; picturebooks and novels engage with discourses about trees, roots and their networks; stories about friendships between children and animals bring animal characteristics and agency to the fore. Climate fiction for young adults modifies postapocalyptic scenarios – the trend toward nature is evident in all genres. The theme, it must also be noted, has long been profitable for publishers with ever new publications issued, albeit frequently devoid of any innovative emphasis in content.

The articles on the focus theme of ›nature writing‹ gathered in this issue of the *Yearbook* show that the perspectives of neomaterialist theory, cultural animal and cultural plant studies as well as an ecocritically oriented literature and media studies can produce new readings or rereadings, especially in the field of current and historical children's and young adult media. It confirms the thesis that children's literature has demonstrated, since the Romantic era, a special connection between children and nonhuman creatures, with the latter characterised by unconventional agency, and hence tells alternative stories of human–nature entanglements.

In this sense, the sixth volume of the *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Kinder- und Jugendliteraturforschung / GKJF* (Yearbook of the German Children's Literature Research Society) participates in the paradigm shift currently taking place in the environmental humanities, with articles on the poetics and aesthetics of writing about nature: New knowledge about the coexistence of humans and nonhuman beings is not simply represented in literature and media, but is produced descriptively and narratively or brought forth in visual, aural and audiovisual processes. Nature writing involves reflecting upon hitherto circumventable anthropocentric positions of observation and narration, and literature and media finding aesthetic means to model the changes in the natural environment and our shared world, to render the relations between humans and nonhuman beings narratable, and to make them tangibly experienceable.

Content

Twelve articles illuminate very different aspects of writing about nature. Christine Lötscher explores how theoretical concepts from neomaterialism and ecocriticism, such as entanglement, are taken up in literary texts in a highly popularised way and linked to narratives about the emotional affinity between children and nonhuman beings. Anna Stemmann combines approaches of literary cultural ecology and ecocriticism with age studies and analyses narratives that tell of generational orders, especially of tensions, along the lines of ecological changes and transformation processes. Based on the observation that anthropogenic climate change manifests itself differently according to location, Suzanne van der Beek and Sonali Kulkarni map the geographical representation of climate change in books for young readers written in and translated into Dutch.

Geralde Schmidt-Dumont traces Henry David Thoreau's nature writing in German girls' books around 1900, where authors immersed their protagonists in nature in highly emotional and identificatory ways. Frederike Felcht traces how ecological thinking around 1900 flows into Selma Lagerlöf's *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, intended as

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a geography textbook for Swedish schools, with a focus on biological and aesthetic diversity. Claudia Sackl uses a postcolonial ecocritical rereading of selected texts by Käthe Recheis to show how they create imaginary ecologies around the trope of the ›Noble‹ and/or ›Ecological‹ Indian that produce knowledge about the complex entanglements of humans, nature, and culture.

Lena Brun describes the garden as a figure of thought for the Anthropocene, which questions and reconceives the relationship between humans and their environment in an ontological frame. Stones, non-human entities to which agency is nonetheless attributed, are examined by Carmen Sippl, who asks how ecological narratives on nonhuman matter might contribute to an aesthetics of the Anthropocene. Alexandra and Michael Ritter write about how climate change and environmental protection are featured in information books and how these can encourage and increase young readers' engagement. Stefanie Jakobi addresses how environmentalists are presented in fictional texts from an intersectionally motivated perspective.

Focussing on Ursula Poznanski's novel *Cryptos* (2020), Elisabeth Hollerweger illustrates the literary procedures of ›future nature writing‹ for the representation of virtual nature and the initiation of immersion and reflection. To conclude the thematic focus, Jule Thiemann takes up the new phenomenon of autoecography, questioning the correlation between a diaristic mode of writing and literary observations of nature in Dara McAnulty's *Diary of a Young Naturalist* (2021).

Beyond the focus theme, three articles explore questions of children's and young adult literature and media from a historical or theoretical perspective.

Pádraic Whyte and Keith O'Sullivan address the challenge that children's literature collections and their associations with canons and histories pose for a contemporary children's literature research increasingly focussed on diversity- and inclusion; taking a synchronic rather than a diachronic approach they consider collections in terms of both the physical and the online spaces they occupy. Joseph Kebe-Nguema uses the girls' novel *Grenzlandjugend* (1934) by Minni Grosch to examine the intersections of gender, race and nation in National Socialist ideology, reading the novel as a harbinger of Nazi genocidal logic. Tijana Tropin and Ivana Mijić Nemet offer a glimpse into contemporary Serbian fantasy for children; they show the diversity of imaginary beings there, and trace their heterogeneous origins and functions.

Last but not least, the reviews: A total of 23 reviews of current 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.

As always, a special thanks for those who played a part in this *Yearbook*. First and foremost to Ingrid Tomkowiak, who is now leaving the editorial board. Her ideas, commitment, and extraordinary expertise have been instrumental in shaping the *Yearbook* in its new digital format. Many thanks! We welcome Anna Stemmann (Leipzig) as a new member of the editorial team, who will work on *Yearbook* from the next issue on. We thank our authors who staked out academic horizons to make the *Yearbook* 2022 an inspiring mesh of theory and analysis, and the peer reviewers for meticulously checking and commenting on the articles. Our special thanks go to the team Agnes Blümer (Cologne) and Lena Hoffmann (Frankfurt/M.), who have once again coordinated the reviews in this volume with great care and circumspection and who, with this issue, pass

on the baton to their colleagues at the Swiss Institute for Children's and Youth Media (SIKJM) in Zurich, Aleta-Amirée von Holzen and Petra Schrackmann, as well as to Simone Fischer for her typographical energy and the truly Anthropocene cover.

We wish all our readers an inspiring read and continuing discussions in the field of children's and youth media, which continues to flourish despite climate change.

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