

*Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Eine Einführung* [Children's and Youth Literature. An Introduction]. Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012. 156 pages.

Research into German children's literature is flourishing, and a valuable addition to the domain is Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer's *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Eine Einführung*, a book which provides the reader with a comprehensive overview of the field. It is divided into five main parts, comprising an overview of the development, theoretical foundation and history of German children's literature as well as six studies of key individual works. The final section consists of a chronological table, summarising the main landmarks of the evolution of German children's literature. Kümmerling-Meibauer's starting point is a definition of the term 'Kinder- und Jugendliteratur', which – unlike the English term 'children's literature' – more clearly distinguishes between literature for young children and for adolescents. This discussion is followed by a detailed survey of its historical evolution. Subsequently, Kümmerling-Meibauer traces the study of children's literature back to the late nineteenth century and highlights its cornerstones up until the present time. Chapter III introduces the main theoretical concerns and research topics, and presents several topical subjects, such as cross-writing, literacy, childhood and media studies. This descriptive chapter is very thorough, which testifies to Kümmerling-Meibauer's comprehensive knowledge of the field. One cannot help but notice that she is well-versed in many of its subfields. Moreover, judging by the many examples of her own relevant publications, one can conclude that she has contributed to the expansion of studies into children's literature to a substantial degree herself.

Chapter IV offers a chronological overview of the history of German-language children's literature, the main traits of which are summarised below. It starts with the purely didactic books used for children in the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, the educationalists' general dismissive attitude towards fiction, merely allowing moralistic textbooks, hampered the development of the novel. The Enlightenment legacies of John Locke (playful learning) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (robinsonades) caused the emphasis to shift away from moralising didacticism to socialisation and child suitability. The result was the development of entertaining belles-lettres. The Romantic era saw the origin of proper children's books, evolving from folktales (c.f. the Grimms brothers and Herder) and adopting the child's perspective. The turn of the twentieth century was characterised by commodification of the book market, with adventure and historical novels comprising the most popular genres. During the inter-war period, realism gained the upper hand. The interference of censors and the output by authors in exile influenced children's literature produced during the Second World War. In its aftermath, different European children's classics left their mark, resulting in the advent of fantasy and experimental literature. In the past few decades, the entire field gained recognition and gradually grew towards adult literature, becoming ever more narratologically and psychologically complex, and culminating in cross-over literature. Other important recent developments are serialisation and the overwhelming impact of new media.

The fifth chapter consists of six analyses of "representative" (84) works of German children's literature. Some of those might, however, not be familiar to an audience outside Germany, although the first case study is well-known: E.T.A.; Hoffmann's fairy tale "Nußknacker und Mausekönig" [The Nutcracker and the Mouse King] (1816), which is perhaps best known in Tchaikovsky's ballet version. Kümmerling-Meibauer explores how this tale deviated from the typical fairy tale narrative mode as established by the Grimm

Brothers. Instead of writing in the expected naive and folkloristic way, Hoffmann set fantastic events against the realistic backdrop of the child protagonist's everyday life. Moreover, the narrative complexity and ambiguous ending bear witness to his innovative child image. Aware of the role fantasy plays in developing children's psychology and cognitive skills, he advocated ideas which have been upheld into the present. This analysis stands out as the most detailed and well-founded of the six.

The second case-study is of Emmy von Rhoden's prototypical "Backfisch-" (girl's story) *Der Trotzkopf* [The Bullhead] (1885). At the time of publication, this book was criticised for its supposed confirmation of traditional gender roles. Kümmerling-Meibauer refutes this criticism by showing that it provided a shaded psychological portrait of a girl oscillating between conformity and disobedience. Kümmerling-Meibauer's analysis of *Der Trotzkopf* is less convincing as there is hardly any evidence that the story had any impact on children's literature outside of Germany. Although she refers to the tomboy-tradition, further association with the Pygmalion-motif or the contemporary literary context of the Modern Breakthrough and the emancipation debate in Scandinavia (cf. Ibsen and Strindberg) would have made the analysis more solid.

The third analysis is concerned with Erich Kästner's *Emil und die Detektive* [Emil and the Detectives] (1929), an innovative work which is often associated with the poetics of the New Objectivity, as is evident in Kästner's groundbreaking depiction of life in a metropolis, metafictional reflections and multiple narrative levels. Its characteristics include film-like narration, child autonomy and optimism, features which can also be found in works by Scandinavian modernist authors such as Astrid Lindgren, Tove Jansson and Gösta Knutsson. In addition, an overview of the international reception of this novel reveals the impact Kästner had on the development of the genre of the children's detective story.

The fourth case study deals with *Was denkt die Maus am Donnerstag?* [What Does the Mouse Think on Thursday?] (1967), an apparently highly canonised collection of poems by Josef Guggenmos. The analysis opens with an overview of German children's poetry. Kümmerling-Meibauer then goes on to discuss the main characteristics of the 123 poems, such as a cyclic, cohesive structure, discursive use of rhyme and play with words appealing to children's metalinguistic awareness.

Next up for scrutiny is Kirsten Boie's 1992 novel *Ich ganz cool* [I Pretty Cool], an example of the psychological realism which started developing in the 1980s as a reaction against seventies social realism. Although the book never became a bestseller (124), its attempt to "visualise" (119) the inner life of a teenage boy growing up in dire circumstances was epoch-making. Also appealing, according to Kümmerling-Meibauer, are its oral quality, innovative blending of different registers and adequate reflection of teenagers' increasingly mediated everyday life. The concluding overview of the ways in which the book has been targeted at different age groups makes for an interesting contextualisation of the novel.

In the last analysis, Kümmerling-Meibauer treats the overwhelmingly popular *Tintenwelt*-trilogy ([Inkworld]; 2003-2007) by Cornelia Funke. Convincingly, she shows that the books tie in with other successful fantasy stories and display postmodern features, raising meta-questions on the meaning of books and alluding to numerous works of world literature. Finally, it also encompasses a female initiation rite, thus establishing a further (albeit antithetic) intertextual link to "eternal" children in *Peter Pan* and Hoffmann's *Das fremde Kind* (and to Pippi Longstocking, for that matter).

*Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Eine Einführung* is part of the "Einführung Germanistik"-series issued by publishing house Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. It is labelled "Bachelor/Master-geprüft [tested]" and indeed seems very suitable for courses at university

level, for self-teaching or even as introductory reading for researchers new to the field. Since it is accessible and clearly written, and makes for excellent orientation in the domain of German children's literature, it really does deliver the goods.

Sara Van den Bossche

Department of Literary Studies – Scandinavian Literatures

Ghent University, Belgium