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# ¿Está muy lejos otra parte? Sobre la concienciación de lo extranjero en la literatura infantil y juvenil alemana

*HOW FAR IS IT TO ELSEWHERE? ON THE  
AWARENESS OF THE ALIEN IN GERMAN  
CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH LITERATURE*

## Resumen

Este artículo presenta una selección de las investigaciones llevadas a cabo por el proyecto descrito en la nota. Comienza abordando algunos problemas relacionados con la terminología: significados de alteridad en un sentido objetivo y subjetivo, grados diferentes de alteridad. Luego se describen algunos fenómenos básicos: la alteridad en varios modelos de realidad ficcionales, el significado de los elementos culturales y su significado en conceptos diferentes en la literatura para niños y jóvenes y diferentes convenciones para retratar otras culturas. Finalmente el estudio destaca el proceso de desaparición de esas convenciones y retratos tradicionales de otras culturas en la literatura para infantil y juvenil.

**Palabras clave:** alemán, cambio de funciones, el "otro", enculturación, álbum, la novela de aventuras.

## Abstract

This article presents a selection of those findings. It starts with some problems of terminology: meanings of alterity in an objective and a subjective sense, different grades of alterity. Then it reveals some basic phenomena: Alterity in several different fictional models of reality, the significance of cultural elements and their meaning for different concepts of literature for children and young adults, different conventions of portraying other cultures in the literature for children and for young people. Finally it highlights the process of disappearance of these conventions and traditional portrayals of other cultures in contemporary literature for children and young people.

**Key words:** German, change of function, otherness, enculturation, picture book, adventure novel

## Introduction

Apart from everyday life the representation of foreign cultures has traditionally occupied an outstanding position in German literature for children and young readers. Those stories about exotic regions and faraway countries had a decisive impact on the emergence of children's and youth literature in the late 18th century and they continued to play an essential role for nearly two centuries. In the course of history not only the specific ideas of the own and the other have changed but also the function of literature for children and young people in general. After 1945 this process was characterized by a high grade of acceleration and by the rise of completely new trends.

The decline of children's literature as a traditional medium of enculturation is partly a consequence of the rise of modern electronic media. Further more it is a result of decanonization and cultural hybridization which is characteristic for post-modern as well as post-colonial conditions. In this context the boundaries of children's and youth literature, literature for adults and popular entertainment media begin to merge. A new type of adventure story distinguishable through its resignation from authentic and educational ambitions and characterized by rich elements of intertextual play is emerging. It moreover leads to a hitherto unknown differentiation regarding content and form of the *cultural alienation* theme within literature for children and young people. These processes and their mutual connections were investigated using a large foundation of material (i.e. nearly 10.000 children's books and stories in German language which were published from the end of World War II until the turn of the century) as part of a research project at the University of Leipzig (1997 – 2006). These processes are referred to as Ent-Fernungen in the title of the abovementioned monograph. This is an untranslatable wordplay with the German word for distance (*Entfernung*), the prefix *Ent-*, which denotes an inversion or a dissolution of the original meaning of the word *Ferne* which means a long distance.

## Terminology

Will we know more about how far it is to Elsewhere, if we know the alien in German Children's and Youth Literature? Some differentiations in terminology are highly relevant in German research (cf. Weinkauff 2006, 18-25). The term *Alterität* (Otherness) represents an objectively measurable or describable level. The term *Alienität* (Foreignness) stands for the subjective perception of otherness. Both terms describe correlations, we cannot use them in an absolute sense. Otherness describes the relation between at least two objects, conditions or constellations. Foreignness describes the relation between a perceiving subject and the object of his perception.

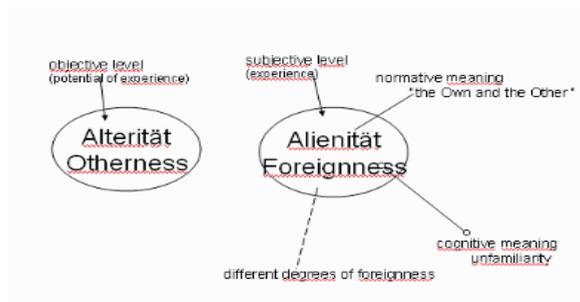


Fig.1. [Diagramme]

Something is different; for example the code of conduct between children and adults in different cultures or groups of society. Such differences can be perceived as foreign by an individual.

Everyday school life is stamped by customs which are varying from region to region and which are changing permanently. The writer of this article attended school in the comparatively liberal city of Francfort in the sixties and seventies (and her children from 1986 to 2004). Since 2001 she had to watch the traineeship of prospective teachers as part of her job at the University of

Education Heidelberg seated in the German federal state Baden-Württemberg, which is governed by the conservative party since 1953. The author had an experience of foreignness every week as she witnessed the classroom routine of beginning each lesson with a choral greeting of "*Guten Morgen*" spoken by the erect standing pupils.

Foreignness can mean two things: The perceiving subject does not know the ritual from her own experience (which is true in this case). It appears therefore as unfamiliar or cognitively alien/strange for her. Or: She believes the ritual is anachronistic. It appears as normatively alien/strange for her (which would be true as well).

The following considerations also refer to phenomena of otherness and foreignness. We are speaking about otherness concerning the different use of language in literature and other fields of verbal communication and about foreignness concerning the literary perception of other countries and cultures.

To determine the degree of this literary perception of cultural differences we additionally use the terms *ferne Fremde* and *nahe Fremde* (the close and the far foreignness; cf. Weinrich 1990 and Turk 1993). The close foreignness is represented by translations and other cultural imports in perceptive literature of other countries. In the perception of the far foreignness exotic projections prevail.

## The Otherness of literature

Literary texts *can* discuss or express cultural differences. In any case they are characterized by some kind of fundamental otherness which originates in their literariness (cf. Mecklenburg 1990). This poetic or aesthetic otherness can be located in three different areas: the area of language and style, the area of communication and the area of the narrated world.

In literary texts language and style are different from every day use. Unlike in pragmatic communication the linguistic signs are not transparent. They do not aim at an unmistakable phrasing of an explicit message. The signs are opaque and the message is ambiguous. Furthermore, narrations construct a fictional world which can vary from our empirical experiences, to our perception of reality (cf. Eco 1996, 101-128).

We usually expect the content of an historical novel not to contradict historical evidence (or what we believe to be such evidence). The European *Volksmärchen* (Fairy Tale) is based on a model of reality, which includes magic parts. In a realistic novel we want to encounter believable, psychologically detailed characters, which might contradict the reality of other genres. A fantasy novel<sup>1</sup> is based on the conflict between two contradictory models of fiction. Therefore, the degree of otherness concerning literary fiction and empirical (historical) reality differs greatly.

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1 In the narrower sense of Todorov's definition: "The fantastic requires the fulfillment of three conditions. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural or supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work -- in the case of naive reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as "poetic" interpretations." (Todorov 1973, p. 33)

Moreover in children's literature at least two other distinctions are made: firstly the disparity between the adult sender of the literary message and the young addressee, who is assumed to perceive reality in a different way and to lack world knowledge and skills in understanding literature and secondly the disparity between the official young addressee and the unofficial adult addressee (cf Ewers 2009, Part I). Additionally it "makes a difference for the originator and the sender of a literary message, whether they approach an adult as an (actual) reader or as a mediator." (Ewers 2009, p.43). The first case encourages ambiguous textual structures which allow for two or more ways of interpretation. Some elements of such a text may be foreign to the first (childish) implied reader and familiar to the second (adult) one. Some other elements, which refer to a childish world view, contain particular experiences of foreignness for the implied adult reader based on his distance to the way a child feels and thinks and on his reflectivity.

haun Tan: *Arrival*  
n. pag. [page 23-24]

## Cultural images in children's and youth literature

Cultural foreignness manifests itself inter alia in literary images of other cultures, countries or groups. In many children's and youth books the intention to communicate an appropriate image of the cultural Own and Other to the adolescent generation is inscribed.

In the course of history these images not only change in regard to content (which images of the Own or Other are appropriate). The general relevance of the enculturation function of the children's and youth literature also change.

The aim to import images of other cultures, which are both faithful to reality and create cultural identity was more important within concepts of children's literature defining itself as didactic literature such as in the Age of Enlightenment, than within concepts which emphasize the entertainment function, the child suitability or aesthetic qualities (cf Ewers 2009, Part III).

The share of cultural images concerning sense-making potential of children's and youth literature undergoes an historical change. This change experiences a special dynamic since 1945.

One example is the perception of children's literature by Astrid Lindgren. Astrid Lindgren's story of success in the German-speaking countries starts 1949 with the German translation of *Pippi Longstocking* [*Pippi Långstrump* 1945] and continuous with the *Smålandian Tales*<sup>2</sup>. The later determine in a not to be underestimated extend the Sweden-image of the Germans. This orchestration of the *Smålandian Tales* as a medium to communicate positive cultural stereotypes met the translation ideology of the 1950s and the 1960s. Translated children's books were to - following a familiar quotation - "build bridges" to the countries of origin and hereby foster international understanding.

In the perception of the fantastic novels of the great Swedish author's late works such contexts are rather irrelevant. *The Brothers Lionheart* and *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter*<sup>3</sup> are not perceived as literary messages of Sweden anymore. The texts add relatively little to the Sweden image and relatively much to the symbol system of the target literature.

2 For example the *Bullerby*-trilogy (swed.: 1947, 1949, 1952; germ.: 1954, 1955, 1956), the stories about *Michel* respectively *Emil* of Lönneberga (swed.: 1963, 1966; 1970; german.: 1964, 1966, 1970) and *Madita* (1961 <*Madicken*, 1960>) and *Ferien auf Saltkrokan* (1965 <*Vi på Saltkrokan*, 1964>).

3 *Die Brüder Löwenherz* (1974 <*Bröderna Lejonhjärta*, 1973>), *Ronja Räubertochter* (1982 <*Ronja Rövardotter*, 1981>)

Imagological approaches to children's literature should not solely study the content of images or stereotypes nor exclusively their ideological tendencies and aesthetical dimensions. They also (and firstly!) have to analyze the amount and the general relevance of these elements in the sense making potential of the texts and ask about the importance of the transmission of cultural knowledge and values within the framework of different concepts of (children's) literature.

## Different degrees of foreignness

As a result of Astrid Lindgren's great success, Sweden is one of the most important producing countries of translations of children's literature for Germany. Almost three-fourth of the children's and young adult's books, which are set in Sweden, are Swedish translations.

Sweden belongs to the "Nahe Fremde – close foreignness" of the German children's and youth literature. This means that the image of Sweden in German children's and young adult literature is mainly coined by Swedish children's literature in the German translation. And in German Children's and Youth Literature Sweden is usually not presented as an "exotic elsewhere" but as a "next-door" similar to the own culture.

This general decrease in the image-making dimension of Swedish translations – as exemplary shown with Astrid Lindgren – means that Sweden tends to be perceived less and less as the alien in German children's literature but more and more as part of a transcultural cross-language children's and young adult's literary public (cf. Weinkauff 2006, 288-316).

Swedish self-images have got a great presence in the few stories set in Sweden and written by German authors. Some of them are strongly influenced by Swedish children's and youth literature. For example Angelika Kutsch who translated many Swedish children's and youth books into German and wrote three novels abandoning herself to those impulses: *Der Sommer, der anders war* (The summer which was different, 1972), *Abstecher nach Jämtland* (Trip to Jämtland, 1977) and *Liebe Malin oder Nie wieder Dein Hänschen* (Dear Malin or Nevermore your Hänschen, 1980, epistolary novel).

German authors who are writing children's books about Sweden very often prefer genres which are shaped by the Swedish children's literature. And the inter-textual frame of reference is dominated by Swedish pretexts like Kirsten Boies novel *Man darf mit dem Glück nicht drängelig sein* (One must not be tailgating for happiness, 1997). The story about the summer vacation experiences of three German children, who travelled with their father to Sweden after the parent's divorce, is full of allusions to Astrid Lindgren's *Seacrow Island*<sup>4</sup>. German-Swedish encounters are only founded in peripherals of storyline and they usually do not create an intercultural dialogue.

On the other hand the far foreignness (ferne Fremde) in German children's and youth literature is used as a basis for projections), with few translations from those regions into German and little impact on their transmitted image. Instead of the inter-textual play with motifs, figures and shapes deriving from the other culture, stereotyping storyline constellations based on the motif of intercultural encounter and characterised by the rhetoric of cultural comparison can be found.

In German literature translations play a very important role, just as in German children's

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4 *Vi på Saltkrokan* (1964); *Ferien auf Saltkrokan* (1965); *Seacrow Island* (1968)

literature. During the long period from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century until today (except the Nazi era) their qualitative and quantitative impact on target literature has been more important than the impact of translations in English speaking countries. But the range of source literatures was very small and the African, Asian and Latin American children's literatures usually remained unnoticed.

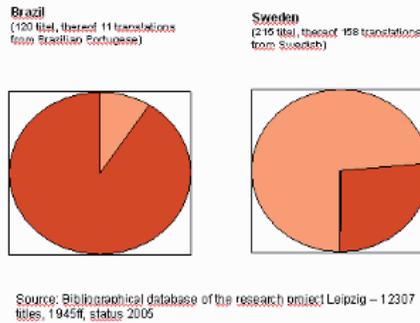


Fig. 2 [Diagramme]

Of all the Latin-American Children's and Youth Literature it is the Brazilian that is most recognized in German-speaking countries because of the worldwide success of the psychologic fantasy children's novels by Lygia Bojunga-Nunes<sup>5</sup>. Mexico for example is the setting of many historical novels and tales for children and young adults. None of these texts is translated from Mexican Spanish to German and the contemporary Mexican children's literature is mainly unknown in Germany<sup>6</sup>.

Never the less, Brazil continues to belong to the far foreignness as well. Translations from Brazilian Portuguese make up a small fraction of the children's and youth books set in Brazil<sup>7</sup>. Like in other far foreign regions particularly adventure novels are set in Brazil. Sometimes in combination with the emigration topic they tell about the perils of the jungle, encounters with dangerous animals and wild and uncivilized people. Unlike the German novels about Sweden they are full of textual and para-textual signals persuading the reader of the authenticity of her view, which actually is much more clichéd and furthermore they do not refer to the literature of the represented country<sup>8</sup>.

5 Nine Works of Lygia Bojunga Nunes are translated in German language by Karin Schreiber and edited by Dressler (Hamburg: 1983: *Maria auf dem Seil* [Corda bamba, 1979] and *Die gelbe Tasche* [A bolsa amarela, 1976]; 1984: *Das Haus der Tante* [A casa da madrinha, 1978] and *Das gebülmte Sofa* [O sofá estampado, 1980]; 1985: *Angelika* [Angélica, 1975] and *Die Freunde* [Os colegas, 1971]; 1986: *Mein Freund, der Maler* [O meu amigo pintor, 1984] und *Tschau* [Tchau, 1985]; 1988: *Wir drei* [Nós três, 1987].

6 I only founded two titles translated from Mexican Spanish in the relevant databases: The novels *Auliya. Eine magische Reise durch die Wüste* (2001) [Auliya, 1997] and *Das grüne Feuer* (2003) [El fuego verde, 1999] by Verónica Murguía. Both are translated by Ilse Layer and published by Nagel & Kimche (Zurich) in the *Baobab* series which are subsidised for translating books from the "South" of the world (that means: from poor countries),

7 Source: Bibliographical database of the research project Leipzig – 12307 titles, 1945ff, status 2005

8 Because of the large number of examples ( ), only some authors can be named: Amalia Schoppe and Sophie Woerishoeffler, who wrote the first youth novels about German migrants and adventurers in Brazil in the 19th century, Karl Tanera and Josef Vierasegerer as representatives of the increasingly aggressive and chauvinistic tendencies in the 20th century which have culminated in the Nazi era and finally the very interesting case of Erich Wustmann (1907-1994), who wrote about 20 books set in Brazil, published between 1956 and 1985 so in GDR so in FRG. Some of his books were edited even in the 1990s. Never the less the traditional adventure themes have been more and more superimposed by new topics like soccer, social and environmental problems. The most popular of the current titles is Isabel Abedis Thriller *Isola* (2007) about the experiences of 12 German teenagers on a small island off Rio de Janeiro.

## Elsewhere in literature for children

The elsewhere in children's literature traditionally is not too far from to the world of the implicit reader. It is usually colorful and picturesque; distances are covered on the wings of fantasy or like Theodor Storm's *Kleiner Häwermann*<sup>9</sup> riding on the moon. In Marlene Reidels: well known picturebook *Kasimirs Weltreise* (1957, Kasimir's round-the-world trip) the whole world is described as a merry playground for little *Kasimir*, and cheerful by nature. We can follow the journey over 24 double-pages, covered by linocuts in vibrant colours depicting what is narrated in the iambic couplet rhymes and verbal text as well. The unsophisticated way of narrating in mono-scenic image sequences and a completely redundant verbal text corresponds to the simplicity of portraying other countries represented by stereotyped details carrying mainly positive connotations: Turkey is represented by a mosque, Egypt by the pyramids, the Netherlands by windmills and women with white bonnets and klompen (clogs) and Africa by lions and cannibals. Due to the easily comprehensible structure of narration and the mirthful atmosphere of the pictures even the latter does not seem threatening. The book stands for a long tradition of portraying other cultures and countries in children's literature (excluding youth literature). Experiences with the foreignness do not take place in this kind of literature.



Fig. 3 Marlene Reidel: *Kasimirs Weltreise* (1957), n. pag. [10<sup>th</sup> double page]

These long-lasting conventions of portrayal are broken in a spectacular manner within modern and post-modern children's literature as it developed since the paradigm shift in the 1970s. The two picture books *Das Land der Ecken* [Land of squares] by Irene Ulitzka and Gerhard Gepp (1993), *Königin Gisela* [Queen Gisela] by Nikolaus Heidelbach (2006) provide examples of this.

The land of the corners is a one-dimensional world controlled by constraint and just like in Andersen's fairy tales it is a child, who stops this. So far, so traditional. Not at all traditional is the almost Kafkaesque appearing harshness and cruelty of the adult law enforcement officers. In the land of corners a harmless object like a ball is granted no acceptance, just as children as such are not accepted.

9 Storm, Theodor: Der kleine Häwermann [1. ed.]. In: Volksbuch auf das Jahr 1850 für Schleswig, Holstein und Lauenburg. Ed.: Biernatzki, Karl. Altona, Verlag der Expedition des Altonaer Mercur's 1849. Many Picturebook-editions from the early twentieth century since today. Engl. Transl. by Anthea Bell: Storm, Theodor: Little Hobbin. New York : North-South Books, 1995.



Fig. 4 Irene Ulitzka, Gerhard Gepp: *Das Land der Ecken* [Land of squares] (1993), n. pag. [4<sup>th</sup> double page]

Like in *Kasimirs Weltreise* each double-page contains one single scene and the story is developed by page turning and changing sites. However, while the narrated and showed world of the traditional picture book leaves an impression of safety and happiness, the modern world appears disturbing and ominous. In *Das Land der Ecken* the verbal and the pictorial text both remain fragmentary. In an abstract style, using a mixing technique with elements of collage pictures, a world of tensions and contradictions is shown. The text blocks, manually printed by stamps from the school-typecase, contain only short sections of character speech which do not transmit a coherent story by itself.

The fictional world was playfully equipped with lots of edged details. This world of corners, which the child calls home, initially seems to offer a delightful and appealing to various senses encounter with the Other for the reader or the listening child. But soon it is revealed to be not only a limited but also a oppressive world. A few pages later, as a symbol of total strangeness, a round ball is introduced to this world.

It is on this double-page (as documented above) where the conflict of action reaches its climax. At this point we know that the "Land of Corners" is not only inhabited by the child and its cat but also by adults. Those adults show neither individual nor gender traits and wear, or to be precise are cloaked or uniformed in, an angled anthracite robe. The child showed the unique discovery (the ball) to one of these grown-ups, to one parent-figure. The trust given by the child is betrayed as the adult takes the ball away from the child in order to present it to a form of consortium (as can be seen above). In this and the following picture the monotony and the constraints of the "Land of Corners" is expressed: The coloring, the threatening impression left by the anthracite figures, the setting, in which the action takes place, and the fact, that the child has obviously been locked out and has to follow the action from outside the window. The adults speak, in contrast to the child, a nonsensical language formed with hard consonants and short vowels. The home of the child is far from being a place of security. There are not many friendly elements – exceptions are the food or the cat – and the child is a stranger, an outsider to the grown-ups. After the ball is destroyed by the adults the cat jumps into action. It shows the child a world beyond the "Land of Corners", which the child leaves for at the end of the book accompanied by a friend, who originated from this promising foreign world.

The character of the child is so radically strange to his environment, like one would expect from a protagonist in an adolescence novel. The picture book (finally) ends just like an adolescence

novel with the departure of the protagonist to an elsewhere, beyond the unbearable constriction of his home world.

The viewer of Heidelberg's picture book *Königin Gisela* cannot benefit from such a comforting prospect. The picture book is also rather complex in terms of narration. It has two plots revolving around a rather unsympathetic protagonist.



Fig. 5 Nikolaus Heidelberg: *Königin Gisela* [Queen Gisela] (2006), n. pag. [22. page]

The story, which the father of the main plot tells to his pleasure-seeking daughter, does not come to a good end. At least not for Queen Gisela, the female character of the parabolic embedded narrative.

She is doomed to ship the ocean alone just like the *The Flying Dutchman*. She had gambled away the chance to live on a paradisiac island by acting like a ruthless colonialist towards the native people.

The title-page and the blurb give away this bleak ending:

„Stell dir ein kleines Mädchen vor,  
[Imagine a little girl  
Das hieß Gisela und wollte  
called Gisela and she decided  
eine Weltreise machen ohne Eltern.  
to travel around the world without her parents  
Nur kam sie nicht so weit,  
but she didn't come as far  
Wie sie dachte, sondern viel weiter...“  
as she thought, but much farther...]

Traditionally the fantastic journeys in children's literature and picture books end like *Kasimirs Weltreise*: "Da war der Kasimir zu Haus. Hier liegt er nun und ruht sich aus" [Now Kasimir was at home, you see him lying down and relaxing]

Or the imaginary trip of little Hänschen (in the popular Children's song *Hänschen klein*): "da besinnt / sich das Kind / kehrt nach Haus geschwind" [Such, the child / changes his mind / swiftly turning back home].

## Elsewhere in youth literature

The actual domain of portraying intercultural encounters and experiences is not children's literature but youth literature. In youth literature the *ferne Fremde* (far foreignness) is often presented as room for proving oneself especially for male protagonists. The template is provided by the classical adventure literature of the 18th and 19th century, from which young adult literature adopted the concept of portraying foreign countries and cultures in line with reality.

Joachim Heinrich Campe's *Robinson der Jüngere* (1. ed. 1779) [*Robinson, the younger*. 1. Ed. 1781-82] can be seen as a founder text of this adventure literature with the intent to educate. Until the late 1960s, adventure novels set in foreign countries with the intent to convey knowledge and educate socio-politically, in which young heroes had to prove themselves in tests and matured towards masculinity, were very common in German youth literature. In the 1970s these texts became suspicious concerning their ideology and temporarily disappeared from the book supply. In the 80s a new type of post-modern game adventure literature was established (cf. Weinkauff 2009, 27-281).

The translation of the novel *Vendredi ou la vie sauvage*<sup>10</sup> by Michel Tournier triggered this development. The fictional world of these novels is not determined by the intent to portray reality adequately – geographical areas, historical events and literary motives function solely as game material. Just like the traditional, the post-modern adventure novels often circle around questions of identity. Tournier's *Robinson*, just like his literary model, is deeply insecure in his existence. The wreckage and his life in the wilderness of the island ask him to find a meaning in his life, which meets the values of civilization. In the end, those values do not triumph but their counter parts do. The hero finds happiness with the persistence of identity in the fusion of nature and cosmos accompanied by a wild life of the moment. In general the post-modern adventure literature did not only dismiss the fictional concept which was dominant in the genre until the 70s but also dismissed its orientation towards storyline patterns of the education novel.

The narratives are therefore not about heroes who have to prove themselves in the distance in order to find to themselves, but have more complex and open developments and endings. The fascination for the elsewhere and the desire for the exotic foreign have therefore lived beyond the previous adventure literature.

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10 *Vendredi ou les limbes du pacifique* [adult version, original language, 1.E.] (1967); *Freitag oder Im Schoß des Pazifik* (Transl.: Herta Osten), 1.Ed. Hoffmann und Campe 1968 [further editions: Rowohlt 1971; Fischer 1982, 6. Aufl. 1994; Aufbau 1984]; *Fridav or the other island* (Transl.: Norman Denny). Harmondsworth : Penguin 1974. *Vendredi ou la vie sauvage* [youth version, original language, 1.E.] (1971); *Freitag und Robinson im Bann der wilden Insel* (Transl.: Rolf and Hedda Soellner) 1.Ed. Boje 1971 [further editions: Ravensburger 1977; under the title *Freitag oder das Leben in der Wildnis* Hanser 1997; dtv 2007; *Friday and Robinson. Life on Speranza Island* (Transl.: Ralph Manheim). London: Aldus Books 1972

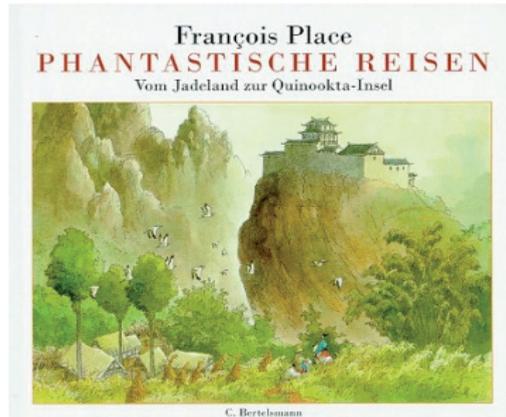


Fig. 6 François Place: *Phantastische Reisen. Vom Jadeland zur Quinookta-Insel*. München: Bertelsmann 1998

## Ent-Fernungen (disappearing distances)

Unfortunately the trilogy *Atlas des Géographes d'Orbae*<sup>11</sup> (1996, 1998, 2000) [Atlas of geographers of Orbae] by François Place belongs to the great number of fascinating children's books which are not translated in the English language. The *Atlas* fits the context of the *Ent-fernung* perfectly because it is a collection of fantastic exoticisms disguised as a specialized book. Sadly the German title of the trilogy takes away the joy of discovering this: *Phantastische Reisen* (Fantastic journeys). This atlas presents a world that seems familiar despite its differentness. It is constructed as a bricolage of myths, literary and fine art motives, historical traditions and geographical knowledge (cf. Dubois-Marcoïn 2007). The concept of fiction is described by François Place as such:

„Il n'y a pas de temps précis pour L'Atlas. Il y a des histoires du XIXe siècle, du XVIIe, d'autres du XVe. C'est pareil pour l'espace, le pays de la Mandragore est sur la route du pays de Jade mais certains endroits peuvent se situer n'importe où. Je ne voulais pas créer un monde fermé, trop fini, qui empêche le lecteur de se promener à sa guise. Je voulais que ce soit un plaisir, pas un système.“(Place 2002)

[There is no precise time in the atlas. Some of the stories are situated in the 19th, others in the 17th or in the 15th century. It is similar with the space. Land of the Mandragore is at the route of the land of Jade, but several places may be situated anywhere. I didn't want to create a closed and ready world, that didn't allow the reader to explore it as he or she wishes. It should be a pleasure, not a system.]

Such an openly constructed text does not agree with a closed concept for the addressee. It is a book for people with itchy feet and half-way literate children, adolescents and adults with a sense for irony, who are able to enjoy intertextual games.

11 François Place: *Atlas des géographes d'Orbae*. Paris: Casterman / Gallimard [Phantastische Reisen. München: Bertelsmann]. 1. Du pays des amazones aux îles indigo, 1996 [Vom Land der Amazonen zu den Indigo-Inseln (transl. by Marie Louise Knott), 1997]; 2. Du pays de jade à l'île Quinookta, 1998 [Vom Jadeland zur Quinookta-Insel (transl. by Marie Louise Knott), 1998]; 3. De la Rivière Rouge aux pays des Zizotls 2000 [Vom Roten Fluss zum Land der Zizotls (transl. by Bernadette Ott), 2000].



Fig. 7 Shaun Tan: *Arrival* (2007), n. pag. [page 23-24]

The fictional concept of Shaun Tan's textless graphic novel *Arrival* (2007; german ed.: *Ein neues Land*, 2008) seems to be similar. He also does not report about actually existing geographical sights but about culturally constructed images and symbols. The content of the picture doesn't mean that the hero of the story arrives at Ellis Island. The picture of the arrival of an emigrant ship in New York Harbour rather belongs to the culturally available reservoir of images concerning the migration in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This does not mean that the narrated time in *Arrival* can be historically concretized. The historical and geographical facts the story hints at are not portrayed here. They are merely one part of the material needed to construct the fictional world. The strange monumental figures, which take up the space of the Statue of Liberty are evidence that it must be a surreal, fantastic estranged world.

The intertextual framework of reference is also coined by the surrealistic painting. The pictures of the story create endless associations which involve the viewer in a game, pushing the intent to find a coherent sense into the background. However the intertextuality does not find its purpose in itself. The many pre-texts are rather needed to tell a – necessarily polyphonic – history of migration: Starting with the farewells from home and family and with the hinting at the things which make life there impossible for the protagonist, telling about the experience of disorientation and with inhospitableness, telling about the communication with the inhabitants of the strange country, from which many have come from elsewhere just like the protagonist; and finally telling about the settling down.

Leaving out verbal text is also a consequence of the topic of the book. The narration without words shows the protagonist's radical experience with foreignness. The immanent concept of the addressee of the book differs some from the one of *Atlas des Géographes d'Orbae*. Although both are all-ages-books, the "Atlas" seems to be more "children's literature-like" than the "Arrival". The humour and the playful character of the *Atlas* contrast the seriousness in which the topic (which is unspecific for children's literature) is explored by Shaun Tan. Additionally, this contrast is highlighted by the difference of the intertextual horizons in the two pieces. François Place basks in allusions of pre-texts and genres, which have always been popular in youth literature. The pre-texts in *Arrival* are unexceptionally part of adult culture.

In 2007 *Arrival* received a special mention *Bologna Ragazzi Awards*, announced by the Bologna

Children's Book Fair, 2009 the book was nominated for the *Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis* (German award for Children's literature). This documents the dramatic process of transgression of the picture book, which used to be part of infantile culture since the middle of the nineteenth century.

In the past four decades not only the formal and contentual conventions of children's and young adult's literature changed in German-speaking areas but also the text immanent concepts of addressees and their cultural and societal function. As a result of the decreasing enculturation function of children's and youth literature the room for experiences with alterity expands. Meanwhile, texts about cultural foreignness loose importance.

This article is based on a large-scale study concerning German children's and youth literature since 1945, which was published in 2006. Our imagological approach leads us to the differentiation between *nahe* and *ferne Fremde* (close and far foreignness), which was reasonable with view on the entire period of investigation and the starting point of the investigated developments.

Considering the convergence of the cultural and literary systems as well as publics, the disappearing of distinct images and the decrease in the image-making dimension of translated children's books, these categories seem only partly useful for the description of current processes and phenomena.

The word-game *Ent-Fernungen* refers to all these processes.

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