NARRATIVE WORKS
Issues, Investigations, & Interventions

SPECIAL ISSUE: NARRATIVE EMOTIONS AND THE SHAPING(S) OF IDENTITY

What Goes On in Strangers' Minds? How Reading Children's Books Affects Emotional Development

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Based on recent studies in developmental psychology and cognitive narratology, this article shows the impact of Theory of Mind on children's understanding and apprehension of other people's thoughts and beliefs presented in fictional texts. With a special focus on the depiction of emotions in two children's novels, Erich Kästner's *Emil and the Detectives* (1929) and Anne Cassidy's *Looking for JJ* (2004), it is argued that the representation of the main characters' states of mind demands specific capacities on behalf of the reader, encompassing mind reading and acquisition of higher levels of empathy, thus fostering children's comprehension of fictional characters' life conditions.

Introduction: Mind Reading and (Children's) Literature

Mindreading—as another connotation of *Theory of Mind* (see Hoffman, 2003; Leverage, Mancing, Schweickert, & William, 2011)—has been one of the hinge words in literary studies since the beginning of the 21st century. Indeed, this cognitive concept is fruitful for the investigation of literary texts from the Middle Ages until the present, since it gives new and fresh insights into canonical works ranging from William Shakespeare's plays to novels written by Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, and Virginia Woolf, to name just a few. Theory of Mind (TOM) is a special cognitive ability that enables us to understand other people's states of mind, i.e., their feelings, thoughts, and imaginings. This acknowledgment usually guides our behavior towards these people; we attempt to read their minds in order to react in an appropriate manner. As studies in cognitive psychology have shown, TOM, or mind reading, is

not innate, but must be acquired in a long-term process that starts in early childhood and stretches up to adolescence and adulthood (Doherty, 2008; Wellman, 1990). A restricted form of TOM is generally acquired when children are approximately four years old. Case studies focusing on false-belief-tasks, such as the famous "Sally-Anne-Task,"[1] have proven the impact of TOM on young children's developing appreciation of other people's states of mind.

In this article I attempt to show that children's literature research definitely benefits from studies in developmental psychology that elaborates the impact of TOM on children's understanding of children's books on the one hand, and on studies in cognitive poetics that apply the principles of cognitive psychology and cognitive science to the investigation of literary texts. One of the seminal issues in mind reading is the appreciation of other people's emotions and how this process might support children's engagement with fictional characters, thus arousing empathy. First, the intricate relationship between TOM and emotions and the developmental stages of the complex concept of empathy will be highlighted. These findings are applied to two children's novels which are targeted at different age groups. While Erich Kästner's children's classic, *Emil and the Detectives* (1929), addresses children between 8 and 10 years of age, Anne Cassidy's young adult novel, *Looking for JJ* (2004), is targeted at teenage readers from 14 years onwards. One common topic is the focus on a crime and how the main characters involved in it can manage to cope with this demanding situation. Besides this, these novels have been chosen for manifold reasons: it will be shown that the depiction of emotions and the degree of empathy required from the prospective readers is adjusted to the cognitive capacities of the target group. This assertion goes hand in hand with a different presentation of the main character. Kästner's Emil evidently belongs to the category of "positive characters" that invites the reader to identify and sympathize with him, whereas Cassidy's main character, Alice, is depicted as an ambiguous character. Therefore, Alice is not a character with whom readers generally will identify; nevertheless, after getting insights into her troubled life, they might empathize with her over the course of the novel. Finally, although both works are still popular and have been extensively discussed by scholars and critics, the impact of the depiction of emotions on the readers' apprehension has been hardly investigated. Quite the contrary: as

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[1] The Sally-Anne-Task is a psychological test used in developmental psychology and developed by Josef Perner and Heinz Wimmer; see Wimmer & Perner (1983). This test measures young children's ability to attribute false beliefs to others.

of yet, most researchers have missed the fine-tuned presentation of emotions in Kästner's novel. The same applies to Cassidy's novel, which challenges the reader with a nuanced description of contradictory emotional states. Hence, a close reading of both novels shall examine which competencies are required to understand the main character's state of mind and how these competencies are related to different levels of empathy as a seminal part of mind reading. In this respect, it is argued that narrative theory should pay attention to the molding of empathy in children's literature as it introduces young readers to a cognitive psychological concept much needed for an understanding of sophisticated literary works.

Theory of Mind and Emotions

It always has been and still is a challenge for researchers to investigate the kind of inferences children can make about others, especially when they are of preschool age. However, children of that age are not only exposed to direct communicative situations at home and in kindergarten that demand their skills to interpret other people's states of mind, they are also surrounded by different media, ranging from picturebooks to comics, television, and movies, not to mention diverse digital media, such as computer games and films, provided through smart phones, computers, and tablets. These multimodal media most often adhere to fictional stories, displaying narrative information by means of text, pictures, and even sound and music. Moreover, these narratives usually show characters—whether humans, anthropomorphised animals or toys—that are engaged in dialogues and diverse actions. To understand and enjoy these stories, readers and beholders have to gather all relevant information in order to construct mental models of the depicted characters. Consequently, children must learn to transfer their capacities of mind reading to fictional figures, a strategy that presents a challenge in multiple ways. How this is solved depends on the medium: picturebooks may depict facial expressions, gestures, and body language. Films and computer games can additionally display the characters' voices, while fictional stories without illustrations particularly rely on the information given in the text. In a nutshell, these diverse media demand recipients who are able to transfer their knowledge about TOM acquired in everyday life to fiction and to build up a mental model of the respective fictional characters.

What is the difference, then, between talking with or observing other people and reading about them in a story? Do these actions require different strategies concerning mind reading? When talking with or listening to other people's talk, children and adults can usually rely on variegated information to decode the implied meanings of this talk, for instance, facial expressions, gestures, body language, and intonation. However, when people are reading texts, this information is missing; nevertheless, a sophisticated reader might be able to decipher the textual information in order to cope with the characters' states of mind.

Yet a detailed description of a character certainly results in a dull text, overburdened with descriptive passages that even then cannot provide all the necessary information that a skilled observer or interlocutor perceives within seconds in everyday life situations. Therefore, authors leave gaps that have to be filled by the readers. By considering the context, readers are required to enrich the textual information by relying on their own world knowledge, by remembering and combining previous information given in the text, and by scrutinizing the text for textual markers that allow for inference of the characters' states of mind.

This procedure of mind reading sounds complicated, but it is just the tip of the iceberg. While people are directly involved in communicative acts in real life situations and have the ability to actively react to other people's feelings, thoughts, and imaginings, readers generally do not have this possibility when confronted with characters in fiction. They assume the role of a more or less passive observer who gets insights into the characters' states of mind. It might even happen that they observe an observer who is part of the textual world and witnesses other figures' behavior and emotional states, thus establishing a level of meta-representation.

In conclusion, one might suppose that there exist two different types of mind reading: mind reading in everyday life and mind reading evoked by characters in literature and other media. However, on closer consideration, this procedure presents a demanding task for the recipients. This mind-reading in literature and other media is a meta-process of reading into characters what the author wants the reader to read (with the possibility of misreading and individual interpretation). If this holds true, one should ascertain that both types are intertwined and that their relationship is not one-sided, but develops in a mutual process. Scholars such as Alan Palmer (2004), Blakey Vermeule (2010), and Lisa Zunshine (2006) have raised the seminal questions of why people enjoy reading

fiction and in what regard they might identify and empathize with the fictional characters. They have referred to the delight readers might gain from recognizing themselves or real people they know in the characters' states of mind. Even if they realize that these characters reveal somewhat strange or unusual—perhaps even disgusting—feelings, ideas, and behavior, they nevertheless might get insights into states of mind that they usually would not encounter in their immediate surroundings.

Although the preoccupation with and the delight in literature—as part of literary or cultural literacy—must be learned in a time-consuming process, its impact on readers' changing and growing perception of other people cannot be denied. Psychological tests—such as West's Author Recognition Tests (see, e.g., Stanovich, West, & Harrison, 1995)—have shown that exposure to fiction can predict performance on measures of social recognition, including empathy.

The Acquisition of Empathy

This overview of different aspects of mind reading is far from complete, but it hopefully has made it clear that mind reading is characterized by cognitive, social, and emotional requirements that need to be met for mind reading to be possible. One seminal step in this regard is to distinguish other people's feelings, thoughts, and imaginings, especially if they are different from one's own feelings and thoughts. The next step is to understand why other people react the way they do, which emotions are prevalent, and how they are connected with mind reading. The discovery of the so-called "mirror neurons" by the Italian neuroscientists Giacomo Rizzolatti and Leonardo Fogassi in the 1990s is especially regarded as a milestone in the investigation of human emotions and empathy (Gallese, 2001). If individuals are capable of recognizing their own feelings, wishes, fears, and thoughts in other people's emotions and behavior, then they are also capable of identifying with them—to acknowledge commonalities and similarities—in other words, to feel empathy.

However, what exactly empathy is, and which cognitive and social requirements need to be fulfilled, is still under discussion. The general assertion is that empathy is the capacity of an observer to get access to the emotional state of another being or fictional character. The American scholars Hastings, Zahn-Waxler, & McShane (2006) go a step further, in that they claim that empathy should not only be classified as the ability to understand another's perspective, but that it also should

provoke a "visceral or emotional reaction" (p. 484). This opinion definitely states that empathy is both the understanding of other people's perspectives and the recognition of one's own emotional reaction, including the capacity to feel with another happiness, fear, or pain (Cosmides & Tooby, 2001).

The concept of empathy plays a significant role, since it influences the multi-levelled acquisition of emotional competence which consists of four developmental stages, culminating in the acquisition of "empathy for another's feelings"—often equated with mind reading or Theory of Mind—which is usually acquired at age four and "empathy for another's life condition" which is acquired at about age 11-12 (Hastings et al., 2006, p. 487).[2] But only from age seven to eight onwards are children usually capable of making comments about other people's states of mind and anticipating their emotional conditions. In their teens, children will additionally learn that multiple emotions can occur at the same time and that a feeling might cause diverse emotional reactions. In comparison to "empathy for another's feeling," "empathy for another's life conditions" demands the ability to discern not only the feelings and imaginings of other individuals, but also of groups, whether it concerns the peer group, or a social, ethnic, or religious group.[3] Only those people who have successfully acquired these complex stages of empathy will develop the concept of "emotional competence" that covers all aspects dealing with the understanding and presentation of emotions (Frijda, 2007).

There is a seminal difference, however, between being confronted with other people's feelings and imaginings in real life or with characters' emotional conditions in literary texts, since the depiction of emotions of fictional characters is always a represented emotionality. It goes without saying that literary works depict emotions and that they are able to evoke the readers' emotions. One might even state that narrative fiction can only exist when it triggers, controls, and manages the readers' empathy.

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[2] The first two stages, coined "global empathy" (i.e. the attempt to imitate other people's facial expressions) and "egocentric empathy" (described as the experience of object permanence and the distinction between one's own identity and other people's identity) are acquired by young children before their second year of age (Gopnik & Slaughter, 1991).

[3] For a more detailed description, see Byrne (2003); Deham, von Salisch, Olthof, Kochanoff, & Caverly (2002); Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Sadovsky (2006); and Rosenblum & Lewis (2003). Kümmerling-Meibauer (2012) has shown that the fourth stage is important in understanding the emotional conditions of characters that provoke negative or ambivalent feelings.

George Butte (2004) describes this capacity as "intersubjectivity": as "the web of partially interpenetrating consciousness that exists ... when a self perceives the gestures, either of body or word, of another consciousness, and ... perceives in those gestures an awareness of his or her own" (p. 28).

When reading a novel that displays a wide array of major and minor characters, the narrative's limited space is responsible for the fact that their cognitive richness differs according to their position and importance for the text's meaning. Whilst minor characters compete with major characters to vie for the readers' attention, they usually figure as background in order to mold an in-depth presentation of the main characters. This interplay provides a complex matrix, thus building a network of intertwining relations that is frequently subdued to changes and developments, which apparently contribute to the narrative's complexity.

Since the majority of researchers working at the interface of literary studies and cognitive studies agree on the significance of mind reading as a seminal precondition for the understanding of fiction, the significant role of children's literature in this developmental process should not be underestimated. For instance, during joint looking at picturebooks, children in the preschool age encounter illustrations that show different emotional conditions of the depicted characters (Nikolajeva, 2012).[4] Children's films visualize the characters' emotional reactions, thus enticing the viewer to grapple with their feelings and imaginations. The same procedure applies to books for children and adolescents, even if they do not have images. In this regard, the reader is invited to focus on the textual information in order to understand the characters' states of mind. As far as I know, there are no experimental studies that examine how children at different age levels cope with the depiction of emotions in picturebooks and children's books, and how this examination might support their emotional development. It is not my intention to comprehensively fill this substantial gap; nonetheless, this article is an attempt to reflect upon the impact of children's literature on children's and young adults' growing ability of mind reading.

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[4] How cognitive studies might contribute to a new approach towards picturebooks is discussed in Kümmerling-Meibauer & Meibauer (2013).

Identifying With a Positive Character:
Erich Kästner's *Emil and the Detectives* (1929/1931/1959)

In Kästner's well-known detective story, the young boy Emil Tischbein, who up until then has lived with his widowed mother under poor conditions in the small village of Neustadt, travels to Berlin for the first time in his life. During his train journey, Emil falls asleep and is robbed by a thief called Grundeis, who then takes advantage of the situation and steals the money that Emil should have delivered to his grandmother. When the train stops at Berlin's Zoologischer Garten, Emil awakens and realizes the loss of the money. Instead of reporting the theft to the police, he secretly follows the thief, although he feels quite forlorn in the big city. Fortunately, he meets the boy Gustav and his gang, who support him in the endeavor to catch the thief. In the end, it turns out that Grundeis is a bank robber searched for under arrest-warrant. Therefore, Emil not only gets the stolen money back, but also receives a reward.

Being regarded as one of the first children's novels inspired by *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Realism), Kästner's novel succeeds in drawing a realistic image of children's everyday life. Due to the artistic rules of *Neue Sachlichkeit* that demand a concentration on the depiction of modern society in a factual manner, critics generally do not consider New Realism as rendering distinguished psychological portraits of the protagonists. Nevertheless, Kästner is able to subliminally refer to the characters' emotional and cognitive states of mind in different regards. The author uses a narrative style which is obviously influenced by the silent movie and expressionism.[5] The description of the figures' body language shows the impact of silent movies, whereas the emphasis on the characters' (troubled) inner minds demonstrates the influence of expressionism. Focusing on the characterization of the main protagonist, I will demonstrate that Emil is subjected to an emotional rollercoaster from his departure in Neustadt until his encounter with Gustav.

Countless articles and monographs exist on Kästner's children's book, in which the authors consistently come to the conclusion that *Emil and the Detectives* depicts a positive image of Berlin. The encounter with

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[5] The author consciously refers to both sources, which can be deduced from the extended prologue "The story does not yet begin." This paratext shows the author's attempt to develop a modern poetics of children's literature that mostly relies on the aesthetics of New Realism. Unfortunately, the foreword has been omitted in the British and American translations so that the tight connection between foreword and main text is hidden to those English readers who cannot read the original version; see Kümmerling-Meibauer (1999) for further information.

the unknown metropolis fascinates Emil and even enables him to gradually mature into a confident boy who competently manages to overcome all obstacles. However, this statement does not exactly match the description of Emil's ambivalent feelings and thoughts during his travel from Neustadt to Berlin and after his arrival at the main station. Indeed, Emil's confidence increases once he meets Gustav and his gang. From then on he is able to perceive the positive aspects of the metropolis. But shortly after his arrival at the main station, he is overwhelmed by a feeling of loneliness and helplessness. A close analysis of the passages of text that precede Emil's arrival in Berlin and of the subsequent description of his first impressions after he leaves the train in search of the thief reveals that he has ambivalent feelings and thoughts, far from the plain, optimistic attitude that literary critics ascribe to him.

As Emil leaves his mother and Neustadt for the first time, he experiences a feeling of unease from the beginning. His uncertainty is additionally stressed by the fact that he has played a trick on the constable in Neustadt. Although it is just a harmless prank, he fears being arrested when he meets the policeman at the station in Neustadt. The small talk with Grundeis in the train compartment increases Emil's uncertainty. He listens in awe to Grundeis' exaggerated story about the multi-story buildings in Berlin, and the possibility of depositing one's brain in a bank safe as collateral security for credit. After many hours, Emil finally falls asleep and has a nightmarish dream. His anxieties, wishes, remorse, and uncertainties merge into a surrealistic dream that visualizes Emil's state of mind: chased by the constable who is sitting horseback on the railroad engine, Emil climbs the facade of a glass skyscraper almost to the top. Since the policeman keeps close on his heels, likewise climbing the building with the train, Emil desperately jumps from the top, using a handkerchief as parachute. Landing in a meadow, he runs to a glass windmill, still followed by the train. Inside the mill he sees his mother, confesses his prank, and begs for help. Like an airplane, the windmill rises into the air. When his mother asks him whether he has kept guard over the money, Emil gets such a shock that he wakes up. He finds himself lying on the carriage's floor since he has fallen from the seat. Quite dizzy from his sleep, he is overwhelmed by a feeling of fright. The text gives no direct explanation for this surprising feeling. But the reader is invited to ascertain that Emil is frightened because of the peculiar situation (lying on the floor in an empty carriage); his nightmare (he gradually realizes that nothing that happened in his dreadful dream has come true); and that above all, he is frightened of Grundeis.

During the whole train journey, Emil has a feeling of unease, but cannot discern the reasons for his inner turmoil, while an attentive reader might have already recognized that Emil is puzzled by Grundeis' fixed gaze, impertinent behavior, and displeasing voice. In addition, his mother's question about the money precipitates Emil's belated discovery that Grundeis has stolen the money. But before he detects the theft of the banknotes, he initially realizes that Grundeis has left the carriage. At first he is quite relieved, emphasized by his whisper "Why, he has gone!" (1929/1931, p. 59). Nevertheless, his reactions—trembling knees, slow motions, and embarrassed face—indicate that Emil is driven by conflicting feelings. His emotions are not described with adjectives or idiomatic phrases; therefore, the reader has to decipher Emil's emotions by attentively reading the text. For instance, the reference to his bodily position, sitting stiff as a poker on the seat, indicates that Emil's feeling of relief is replaced by a feeling of unease. The relevant text consists of one set of sentences that describe what Emil is doing and another that describe what Emil is thinking. The latter are distinguished by a combination of inner monologue and free indirect speech. Emil thus attempts to reassure himself that everything is settled and that nothing unusual has happened while he was asleep. The reiterated reference to "money" and "pocket" prepares the reader for Emil's discovery that Grundeis has stolen the money. However, Emil's futile search for the money, the fumbling in his pockets, and the repeated "the money was gone!" (1929/1931, p. 60) reveal the boy's growing panic. While searching for the lost money, Emil pricks his fingers on the pin with which he had fastened the money to his jacket. He starts to cry, not because of the pain, but because of shame and guilt. To make this clearer to the reader, the implied narrator inserts an explanation of the close relationship between Emil and his mother and indicates how long his mother had worked to earn the money.

Determined to find a solution, Emil reflects upon possible strategies to catch the thief. He thinks about different actions, such as pulling the emergency cord, crying for help, and looking for the conductor, but he also foresees what might happen if he informs other people about the theft. To this extent, Emil is absorbed in his thoughts and runs through different dialogues, switching between his own statements and other people's responses, thus showing his capacity to consider other people's states of mind. Therefore, the reader is confronted with a specific strategy of mind reading, which is characterized as *metarepresentation*. Interestingly, Emil's own statements are written as

third-person-narrative, whereas the statements ascribed to other people are written as first-person-narrative: "That meant, added to everything else, he would be mixed up with the police .... Instead, he [i.e., Constable Jeschke] would be obliged to report officially: 'I don't quite like that schoolboy, Emil Tischbein from Neustadt'" (1929/1931, p. 64).

After considering various strategic plans, Emil comes to the conclusion that he cannot ask other people for help. Although he shows his capacity for mindreading, he misinterprets his own situation. For instance, he does not consider that it is only remotely possible that the policemen in Berlin know about the Emil's harmless prank in Neustadt. Nevertheless, in contrast to Neustadt, where everybody knows everybody else, Emil immediately senses that the situation at the main station is unusual and quite a challenge for him. Looking out of the compartment's window he glimpses a man with a bowler hat and assumes that this might be Grundeis. For this reason, he decides to follow him secretly, hindered by his heavy suitcase and ignorant of the location. Kästner ingeniously catches the boy's confusion by switching between different angles, comparable to changing camera perspectives. Some events are shown from the boy's perspective and some from outside, as if taken in by an uninvolved bystander: "Where was the bowler hat? The boy stumbled around people's legs, hit someone with his suitcase and ran on. The crowd was getting denser and denser and it was harder and harder to forge a way through. There! There was the bowler hat! My word, but there is another! Emil could hardly carry his suitcase any farther" (1929/1931, pp. 66-67.). Furthermore, the narrative molds Emil's inner monologue with statements about the boy's movements in the crowd.

The short sentences, the repetition of words, the words printed in italics that stress accentuation and voice, the punctuation characterized by an increasing use of exclamation marks, and the arrangement of the sentences on the page mainly serve two functions: to emphasize the boy's cognitive and emotional stress, and to facilitate the young readers' understanding of Emil's state of mind.[6] Kästner avoids characterizing

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[6] Interestingly, the second British translation, by Eileen Hall (1959), is strikingly different, adapting Emil's inner thoughts and observations into rather descriptive sentences: "In the crush, Emil found he had lost sight of the bowler hat, but he blundered on, stumbling round people's legs and bumping them with his suitcase; but he kept doggedly on till he saw it again. But then, all at once there were two bowler hats. The suitcase was so heavy it slowed Emil down terribly, but it might get stolen if he put it down somewhere so that he could run after his man" (1929/1959, p. 38). In this translation, Emil's emotional condition and the reasons for his decisions are clearly stated, so that the child reader will not be misled in his or her interpretation.

Emil's emotional condition by using adjectives or idiomatic phrases that adequately describe how Emil feels at just this moment. On the contrary, he inserts text markers that indirectly refer to Emil's emotions, thus leaving it to the reader to realize what is going on in the boy's mind. Since Emil is construed as a positive character, readers empathize with his delight in his upcoming journey to Berlin, but also with his uncertainty about what he can expect in the unknown city and his relatives' home. As readers comprehend Emil's situation, they easily might also slip into his shoes, as if seeing the events through his eyes. Fascinated by Emil's unexpected dream and his precipitous escape, the reader is compelled to discover the boy's further perceptions and considerations.

When leaving the main station, Emil is overwhelmed by various impressions that touch upon all the human senses: sight (illuminated advertising, multi-storey buildings, shops, streets crowded with people and vehicles); hearing (traffic noise, people's loud voices, and music); smell; taste; and touch (carrying the heavy suitcase and the flower bouquet, and bumping into people). Overwhelmed by synaesthesia, Emil nevertheless keeps on the thief's heels and climbs into a tram. He then realizes that he does not have money to pay for the fare, and fears being caught by the conductor. Although a man gives him the money he needs to buy a ticket, he is not inclined to listen to Emil's story. Hence, the boy experiences that nobody is interested in his problems and that others are just concerned with their own worries. Surrounded by a huge crowd, with everyone looking in different directions and avoiding eye contact, Emil is assailed by an overwhelming feeling of loneliness, culminating in the statement: "Emil swallowed hard and felt very unhappy and lonely" (p. 82).

Remarkably, this sentence has two adjectives that describe emotional conditions. Since this sentence closes the chapter, it builds up a climax, leading to a new location and other figures in the subsequent chapter. The emphasis on loneliness and unhappiness also marks a turning point, since Emil meets Gustav and his gang shortly afterwards. From this moment onwards, Emil appears to have completely changed. He is confident, thoughtful, bright, and therefore able to acknowledge the positive aspects of metropolitan life.

In Kästner's novel, the reader is invited to sympathize with the main protagonist who is presented as a "positive" character from the start. For this reason the moral estimation of Emil does not change at all. Nevertheless, the author succeeds in presenting a consistent psychological

portrait of a young boy who is successfully struggling with different problems, thus allowing insights into Emil's emotional and cognitive development. To understand the boy's emotional condition, "empathy with another's feelings" must have been sufficiently acquired. The focus of attention is mostly centred on Emil's feelings and thoughts, although his economic and social conditions are mentioned at the beginning of the novel. Since children at age ten have already acquired a basic sense of the fourth stage, "empathy with another's life conditions," they might be able to comprehend the reasons for his emotional turmoil after the discovery of the theft—that is, Emil's feeling of guilt towards his hard-working mother. Nevertheless, to support readers' understanding of Emil's state of mind, which runs the gamut from anxiety to curiosity and loneliness, Kästner every once in a while inserts narrator's comments into the text in order to avoid misunderstandings and to guide the reader in a specific direction. By the exclusive concentration on Emil's inner state of mind (the reader does not get detailed insights into the other characters' thoughts and feelings), the author facilitates the process of mind reading. Since the other characters' actions and emotions are centered on Emil, the inexperienced child reader might thus be able to comprehend his emotional and cognitive development as it is reflected in other characters' reactions on the one hand, and as it is mirrored in Emil's inner state of mind on the other.

The two chapters that present Emil's train travel to Berlin, his arrival at the railway station, and his search for Grundeis in the main station reveal that Kästner draws a convincing portrait of the main character's emotional turmoil. Since readers are invited from the beginning to identify with Emil, they certainly empathize with his ambivalent feelings, following his journey from the small town of Neustadt to the new urban space of the metropolis of Berlin. While Emil is characterized as naive in the first chapters, he envisions new experiences during his train travel and in the Berlin main station. These experiences not only contribute to the boy's maturation, which is evident in his ability to make decisions on his own, but also prepare Emil for the meeting with Gustav and his gang. From the moment he knows that he has new friends who support him, he feels safe again, thus regaining his former self-assurance. Although the reader also has some insights into Emil's life conditions, the focus of attention is on Emil's individual feelings and thoughts. Therefore, readers must have at least acquired the third stage of empathy development, that is, "empathy with another's feelings" in order to comprehend Emil's changing emotional condition

during his trip to Berlin. Since Emil is depicted as a positive character from the start, readers usually have no problem sympathizing with a main character who is presented as a role model for the prospective reader. In addition, by focusing solely on Emil's interior world and leaving out the thoughts of the other characters, the author facilitates the reader's identification with the main character.

Having Empathy with a Child Murderer: Anne Cassidy's *Looking for JJ* (2004)

The case is quite different when readers are confronted with characters who give rise to negative or ambivalent feelings in the beginning. A thorough analysis of literary works that display ambiguous protagonists might therefore reveal which narrative strategies are employed to challenge readers to develop a sense of empathy with such characters, whether they are social outsiders, physically or mentally handicapped persons, or even figures who committed awful crimes. For a very long time, until the end of the 20th century, the sympathetic depiction of child murderers was more or less a taboo topic in children's literature. That a child might murder another child seemed to be out of the question as a suitable subject for children's book authors. But this has changed during the last few decades, leading to unusual young adult novels that venture to grapple with this provocative topic (see Abate, 2013).

The murder case of Mary Bell, which caused a great sensation in the UK in 1968 and led to lively debates about the handling of juvenile criminals, inspired Anne Cassidy's fiercely discussed novel *Looking for JJ* (2004). Eleven-year-old Mary Bell, having been severely mistreated and sexually abused by her mother, coolly killed two young children within a couple of weeks. Since she was underage, she stayed for some years in a young offender's institution for boys and afterwards in a female prison. After her release at age 17, several journalists tracked her and forced her to move several times, always shunned by neighbors and peers. Drawing on the case files, journal articles, and a lurid biography written by a female journalist, Cassidy complemented her story with fictive passages and a new murder version. Actually, Cassidy's description of the murder is partly based on another awful crime, the so-called James Bulger case. In 1993, two ten-year-old boys kidnapped the two-year-old boy James Bulger in a British shopping mall and brutally killed him just for fun.

"Everyone was looking for Jennifer Jones. She was dangerous, the newspapers said. She posed a threat to children and should be kept behind bars. The public had a right to know where she was. Some of the weekend papers even resurrected the old headline: A Life for a Life!" (3). With this passage starts Cassidy's novel that centers on the seventeen-year-old girl Alice Tully who lives with Rosie, a social worker, in a small British town. She leads a quite normal life, attending high school, casually working in a coffee shop, and having a boyfriend. However, nobody besides Rosie knows that Alice is the child murderer, Jennifer Jones, who killed another girl when she was ten years old. After six years in juvenile prison, she was released. In order to keep her new residence secret, she has received a new name. Nevertheless, detectives and journalists attempt to close in on her, while articles published in yellow press blame her for the murder and spur on the public to protest against liberal penal legislation. For this reason, Alice is always alert to hiding her real identity and not telling anyone about her past. Despite her new life, the dreadful tabloid articles and a warrant poster distributed by a private detective permanently cause Alice, alias Jennifer, to reflect upon her crime. She is eager to read all newspaper articles that deal with the murder case. Her bodily reactions— stiffened back, trembling hands, dry mouth, flickering eyes—betray her emotional condition, which is characterized by shame, fear, and horror. Since it is not mentioned in the beginning that Alice and Jennifer are the same person, only an attentive reader is able to recognize the clues that indicate why Alice is fascinated by the murder case on the one hand, and why she is reacting in such a strange way on the other hand.

In order to build up tension, the novel gradually acquaints the reader with the background story through integrated flashbacks that refer to the past. Physically and mentally abused by her single mother, Jennifer grows up in appalling circumstances, characterized by erratic relations, missing affection, and deficient schooling. Disapproved of by her beloved mother, who started a promising career as a model but ended up as a star in porn films, Jennifer is forced to constantly move from one city to the next, unable to build up friendships with peers.

The combination of three time levels, which are interconnected by flashbacks and Alice's dreams about the future, contribute to a complex psychological portrait of a girl who has been physically and mentally neglected. She experiences affection for the first time when living with social worker Rose. The flashbacks always begin when Alice is reminded of her depressing past by reading tabloid articles, looking at family photos, and by sensations that evoke her initially peaceful life in the

village, but also the smells and noises of the nature reserve. Despite her bad experiences with her mother who cannot support her, Alice is not able to get away from her. She consistently agrees to meet her mother, always disappointed by her emotional coldness and self-pity. After these encounters she is emotionally unbalanced, reacting with sudden fits of rage. She reveals her shiftlessness and deep vulnerability first and foremost when she is confronted with tabloid articles that accuse her of being a "monster" and "child murderer." Her body language and state of mind demonstrate that she cannot cope with these imputations. Her body stiffens, she feels cold inside, and has the impression that the headlines are not dealing with her, but with another person. Moreover, in this and all other overburdening situations, she reacts in a way reminiscent of schizophrenia. She seems to divide into two persons: one sitting at the table, reading the newspaper, and another person watching her from a distance: "The headline was everything she thought it would be: Child Killer Gets New Life in Holland. She felt curiously cold about it. As if she wasn't sitting reading about it, but was watching herself, from a distance, like an actress in a film" (p. 95).

The seminal question that was not sufficiently discussed during the trial of Mary Bell, namely why Mary became a murderer, is the focus of Cassidy's novel. By a comparison of articles from the yellow press, interviews with Alice's mother, the judges' and social workers' statements, and Alice's reminiscences, the author constructs a complex matrix of opinions, beliefs, and ideas that do not permit simple assignments of guilt. In the course of the reading process the reader is enticed to modify the stylized image of the callous and ice-cold murderer. Alice has to face her past in order to accept that she committed a dreadful crime seven years ago. She reveals deeper insight into her own responsibility when she confesses her crime to her boyfriend, considering the risk that he might be horrified and refuse to maintain their relationship. Moreover, she must acknowledge that she will only be able to build a new life when she accepts her third new identity, which demands tearing down the bridges behind her and regarding her former life with Rose as an intermediate step towards maturation and adulthood. Finally, she has to accept that she cannot decisively influence the image of the "evil murderer" established by the public.

In order to facilitate the reader's understanding of Alice's development, the first part of the novel concentrates on her everyday life, once in a while interrupted by flashbacks into her childhood. The reader gradually acknowledges that the tabloid headlines about Jennifer Jones

speak about Alice's former life. Whilst it is not quite clear in the beginning why Alice reacts in a strange way when she reads the headlines or meets the detective in the cafe, the dialogues with her social worker and the flashbacks eventually reveal Alice's true identity. Once the reader is acquainted with Alice's real life conditions and her present emotional state of mind, the text turns to the past, concentrating on Jennifer's childhood over the course of four years. The reader is thus prepared for the emotionally wearing description of the murder case. Jennifer and Michelle start to quarrel in the woods, after Michelle accuses Jennifer's mother of being a prostitute. Jennifer defends her mother and claims that she is a model, whereupon Michelle sarcastically answers that her own dad is Father Christmas. Jennifer tries to follow Michelle, but stumbles over a root. When Michelle offers a hand for help, Jennifer is appalled by her commiserating face. Whilst Jennifer is overwhelmed by a gamut of emotions, Michelle terminates their friendship:

> "After all," Michelle continued, "we can't choose our parents."
>
> With that she swivelled round away from her and began to walk off. Michelle had the right parents. Jennifer went after her.
>
> "Don't bother following me!" Michelle said, without turning round. "You and me aren't friends anymore!"
>
> She would have no friends. Just her mum and her. Alone together. Her mum who loved her enough to offer her to Mr Cottis. She felt a sudden sense of loss; as if everything important was walking away. She raised her hand to stop it, to reach out and pull it back. *Be my friend*, she wanted to say, she might have even said it as she raised the baseball bat and swung it at the back of Michelle's head.
>
> Everything froze for a second and she swung it again.
>
> *Stop*, she wanted to say. *Don't leave me*. And Michelle didn't. She dropped like a stone on the ground before her. (p. 211).

This peculiar and awful situation is told as a flashback memory and spans almost twenty pages. The author convincingly shows the emotional turmoil of Jennifer that finally leads to the undesired killing.

Michelle affronts Jennifer in various ways, insulting Jennifer's mother for being a porn star and prostitute, and claiming that Jennifer is mentally ill. This crucial episode evidently makes clear that Jennifer is not master of the situation anymore. Her inner speech reveals that she is afraid of being alone with her mother and her demands to pose for porn pictures. Although she is torn between love and animosity towards her mother, she realizes in a flicker that she badly needs someone in whom she might confide. For this reason she regards Michelle's sarcastic remarks as a betrayal of their friendship, unable to acknowledge that Michelle likewise plays on Jennifer's naivety and good faith in order to have someone who admires her. Although Jennifer wishes to call her back, she hits her with the baseball bat instead. This confusion of physical action and state of mind apparently points to the girl's emotional turmoil. She loses control over her body and instinctively lets out the aggressiveness she has held back for many years. Overwhelmed by a feeling of deep despair, she transforms her intended her attempt at conciliation into a violent act. This is additionally stressed by the fact that the murder is observed by a wild cat, a symbol of Jennifer's wildness and an animal with whom she identifies.

The novel's third part focuses on Alice again, showing her increasing maturation. She realizes after some sessions with a psychotherapist that she cannot change the past, but that she is responsible for making the best of her future life. In this part, the social environment comes to the fore, that is, Alice's living with Rose, her relationships with peers, neighbors, and the coffee shop owner, and her love affair with Frank. Alice also makes friends with the new neighbor Sara, a teacher, who looks after her and proposes to help her with her homework. While the first two parts concentrate on Alice's everyday life; her emotions, thoughts, and imaginings; and her childhood history, the third part discloses a new topic: in order to keep Alice's former identity secret, almost everyone has to lie. This concerns Alice herself, but also Rose and the psychotherapist. On closer consideration, it is evident that other people in Alice's surroundings also show a tendency to lie, for quite different reasons. The detective is lying about his job, because he feigns looking for a missing girl at Alice's college, while Sara pretends just to be a teacher. In reality, she is a reporter charged by her newspaper agent to spy on Alice in order to write an exclusive story about the girl. Thus, Alice is surrounded by adults who are lying, either to support Alice or to deceive her. The only person who is not lying is her boyfriend Frank. He trusts Alice; for this reason the roof comes down on his head when Alice

finally confesses her crime, because he then realizes that their relationship has been based on a lie, as well.[7]

The fourth part—the shortest one, with approximately ten pages—relates Alice's move into a dormitory at Exeter University, assuming the new name of Kate Rickman. Although she receives two supportive letters from Frank, who apologizes for his behavior and asks her to contact him, she decides against this. Frank belongs to her former life when she bore the name Alice Tully: "But there was no such person as Alice Tully anymore" (p. 299). This sentence closes the novel, but indicates an open ending, since it is up to the reader to decide whether Kate alias Alice alias Jennifer will succeed in overcoming her emotional imbalance caused by guilt and shame.

Cassidy convincingly succeeds in drawing readers into the story by confronting them with a compelling narrative about the circumstances that force a ten-year-old girl to commit an awful crime. The author progressively reveals important information that leads the reader to solve the puzzle of the triple naming of the main character and to dissolve the connection between variegated characters who disguise their actual intentions and motivations. The resulting network of lying notably contributes to the complex narrative structure of the novel, which is complemented by a web of opinions and beliefs created by different "voices" that narrate the events of the story, including Alice's mother, the judges, Rosie, her boyfriend, and the newspaper articles. Collectively, they establish an extensive psychological portrait of a young girl who has been struggling with physical and emotional abuse.

Hence, Cassidy's novel entices the reader to develop both "empathy with another's feelings" and "empathy with another's life conditions," thus preventing readers from drawing judgemental conclusions about Alice's unusual behavior and her crime. Since readers only gradually receive information about Alice's social background and her disturbed emotional development, they are invited to cope with the main character's ambiguous feelings and thoughts. The author's strategy of giving access to different characters' states of mind particularly contributes to the novel's narrative complexity, which demands a level of mind reading that transgresses the capacities required to understand Kästner's novel. By switching between Alice's and the other characters' feelings and thoughts, the reader is confronted with diverse attitudes that contribute to the modification of assumptions built up during the reading process. To

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[7] The significance of lying in children's literature has been investigated by Kümmerling-Meibauer & Meibauer (2011) and Mallan (2013).

this extent, Cassidy succeeds in creating a young adult novel that avoids presenting lopsided characters. On the contrary, after reading the novel, readers are challenged to reflect upon the intricacy of emotions and how they are influenced by individual dispositions, human relationships, and social conditions.

Conclusion

An analysis of the novels written by Erich Kästner and Anne Cassidy reveals that in the course of the reading process, readers are encouraged to feel empathy with the main characters. While the main character in Kästner's novel is depicted as a positive character with whom the readers will sympathize from the beginning, the main protagonist in Cassidy's novel is presented as an ambiguous character who definitely challenges the readers, but also entices them to develop a sense of empathy with Alice's precarious life conditions. The insight into the representation of emotions in these literary works demands the consideration of multiple aspects, for instance: the author's intention; the reception by the readers, who are guided by their perceptions and assumptions; and the literary work's emotional structure—that is, signals and markers that refer to emotional conditions. Kästner and Cassidy reach this goal through complex narrative strategies, in order to express emotions and to support the readers' changing attitude towards the protagonists. Both novels demand the readers' ability to develop not only "empathy with another's feelings," but also "empathy with another's life conditions." These two stages are acquired relatively late, according to research in developmental psychology. While Kästner's novel invites the young readers to consider the main character's emotional development with a clear focus on his point of view, Cassidy's novel goes a step further in that it requires more sophisticated readers who are able to distinguish different perspectives and to modify their moral judgement of the main character. In this respect, both authors successfully manage to give a detailed description of the main characters' emotional changes that spawn hopeful joy from deep despair. Kästner and Cassidy reach this goal by depicting the characters' emotional growth that is reflected in their cognitive reflections and bodily reactions. Thus, the authors succeed in combining insights into the characters' states of mind with a detailed characterization of their body language and facial expressions. Therefore, these novels demonstrate that they do not only support the readers' emotional development, but also affect their notion of what it must be like

to be someone else, thus contributing to the audience's growing capacity of mind reading on the one hand, and the readers' grappling with the concept of empathy on the other.

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