

Over troubled waters. Exile and homelessness in European children's literature

Bodily reduction that visualises lack of power is a motif found in numerous children's books. A very small character, whether a tiny human being, a small animal or a toy, expresses a sense of vulnerability that can be seen as a manifestation for marginalization in the society, and is characteristic for many European war time stories for children. In my paper, I will analyse depictions of exile and dislocation where the child characters have been substituted with toys or miniature characters. By comparing classic examples like Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* (1952) and Solveig von Schoultz and Tove Jansson's *The Teddy Bear Trip* (1944) with contemporary stories of exile and immigration, the paper will discuss how reduction of scale and size is connected to questions of power and marginalization. Whether published in the middle of the 20th century or in the beginning of the 21st century, stories with miniature protagonists are often used to describe different kind of social, economical and political changes. Both Gaston Bachelard (1969) and Susan Stewart (1984) suggest that the appeal of the miniature lies in the possessable and utopian. Since a miniature artefact or toy is usually modelled after normal size objects or living things, the concept of miniature always includes a dual perspective (Stewart). Apart from the narrative possibilities the miniature offers in children's literature, it is evident that these stories contain strong moral and ideological implications. They all suggests a changed vision and a revised perception and thus serve as a method of showing the familiar world from a new, and often critical, perspective.