

“Bestimmt wird alles gut”: Journeys and Arrivals in Contemporary German Children’s Books

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Introduction

In the picture book *Karlinchen. Ein Kind auf der Flucht* (Fuchshuber 2016), the young girl Karlinchen has to leave home on her own and find another place to live. She seeks protection at the home of the catfishes, in the trees where the waxwings live and at the home of the crows, but she is not welcome to stay with any of them. She comes to the conclusion that they do not like, help or understand her because she is a foreigner and not like them.

In the last few years, many people from war-torn countries have left home to seek safety in distant countries. Refugees have come to Europe to an extent that has not been seen since World War II. It is estimated that around 50% of the refugees are children under eighteen and many of them have ended up in Germany. The fact that many people leave their homes and become foreigners in new countries is also noticeable in literature. In recent years, an increasing number of books on this topic have been published, not least children’s books. It can be assumed that the children and their families have experienced a great deal of hardship on their adventurous and sometimes traumatic journeys from different countries and through Europe. It can also be assumed that many of them find their new “homes” unfamiliar and strange or even have difficulties finding a new home like Karlinchen. Despite this,

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many children's books depict escape from war as a form of travel or adventure with a happy ending. Warnqvist (2016) has studied how escaping war has been thematised in Swedish children's books 2014–2016 and draws the following conclusion: "The authors of these works have generally chosen to portray the escape from war as a journey or adventure story with a happy end rather than focusing the flight as a trauma" (p. 63).¹ Dall'Armi (2017) draws a similar conclusion, when she calls the absence of flight causes in some German children's books for "a deplorable zero position" (p. 110).² The challenges of keeping the family together, settling and finding work in the new country, and feeling alienated (such as described above with Karlinchen) rarely figure upon first sight. Further, reflections on whether the families who escape made the right decision or not, expectations in terms of their new life and discussions of being "the other(s)" in the new country are often absent.

This chapter considers how escape from war and the arrival situation are depicted in eight picture books published 2016–2017 in German: *Bestimmt wird alles gut* (2016) by Kirsten Boie, *Karlinchen. Ein Kind auf der Flucht* (2016) by Annegert Fuchshuber, *Flucht* (2016) by Niki Glattauer, *Amani, sieh nicht zurück* (2016) by Katrin Holle, *Aminah gehört zu uns* (2017) by Petra Mönter, *Zugvögel* (2016) by Michael Roher, *Wasims Weste* (2017) by Anja Offermann and Christiane Tilly and *Nusret und die Kuh* (2016) by Anja Tuckermann. Most of the books describe the original environment of the children (their home, family, etc.) and the journey as refugees. My focus is on whether the fact that the families have to escape to a foreign country is problematised in any way: How do the children (and their families) in the books deal with the new language and with communication? Are there any difficulties concerning identity and "otherness"? What

¹ Original quotation: "Upphovspersonerna till dessa verk har över lag valt att skildra flykten från krig som en rese- eller äventyrsberättelse med lyckligt slut snarare än att fokusera flykten som trauma" (Warnqvist 2016, p. 63). Translation from Swedish into English: Anneli Fjordevik.

² Original quotation: "Eine Verortung von Fluchtursachen nehmen die Texte nicht vor, eine bedauerliche Nullposition [...]" (Dall'Armi 2017, p. 110). Translation from German into English: Anneli Fjordevik.

expectations/reflections (such as whether or not they made the right decision) on the new life – if any – are being related? How does the stress affect them and their families? And do the stories about leaving home and arriving in a foreign place have entirely happy endings?

Leaving Home

A journey offers the traveller an opportunity to interact with foreigners and to learn about the unknown. Children’s literature shows a “double connection”³ to the literary system on one hand and to the educational on the other hand; its main task is stated as “conveying knowledge and values”⁴. Thus, the “learning situation” or educational opportunity is a well-known pattern in children’s literature, not least when it comes to understanding different cultures. Kåreland emphasises the educational role of literature and the way in which fiction can facilitate the understanding of “the other” or “the foreign/the strange” (Kåreland 2013, p. 137).⁵ Accordingly, the narratives in children’s literature very often start at home: “children and childhood are strongly associated with the idea of home” (Östlund 2013, p. 1). Most of the children and their families in the analysed books have nice homes with cute houses, pianos, books, cell phones, friends, relatives, and so forth before the war begins; in all the books, a rather idyllic life is described before they have to leave their homes. Then the war comes and they are forced to leave, probably forever, which they – of course – do not want to do. When the father in *Bestimmt wird alles gut* (Boie 2016) tells the children that they are going to leave everything behind and travel away without their grandparents, cousins, uncles and aunts, the young boy Hassan protests loudly: “Dann will ich nicht hin!” [“Then I don’t want to go there!”]⁶ In this book, the boat trip is very central. The ship the family boards looks very small and old, and it is very crowded. The boat trip

³ See the chapter “Doppelte Zugehörigkeit zum literarischen und pädagogischen System“ in O’Sullivan 2000, p. 112ff.

⁴ Original quotation: “Kenntnisse und Werte zu vermitteln” (Ewers 2000, p. 178).

⁵ See also Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* (1997).

⁶ Translations from German into English by Anneli Fjordevik.

lasts eight days, and their only nourishment is water and rice (after five days, the adults do not even get rice). Finally they reach Italy without passports or any belongings and with very little money, from where they take the train to Germany (without tickets as they do not have enough money since their luggage has been stolen by the smugglers). Also in *Flucht* (Glattauer 2016), the journey is central. Of fourteen pages, twelve describe the family's journey across the ocean in a small boat. The story is told by the cat E.T., who watches the family from the "outside" and refers to them as "meine Menschen" [my people]. In this story, the refugees do not go to the North to seek safety, but to the South. The mother says that they should get away and the father asks where to:

Mutter hat gesagt: *In den Süden. Über das Meer.* [Mother said: *Southward. Over the sea.*] *Nach Afrika?*, hat der Vater gefragt. [To Africa?, the father asked.] *Hast du eine bessere Idee?*, hat die Mutter gefragt. [Do you have a better idea?, the mother asked.]

Young readers probably understand better that this could happen to anyone, a didactic aspect that is often listed as one of the characteristics of children's literature.⁷ We care for others unequally, depending on how easily we can imagine ourselves in their situations, Wilkie-Stibbs argues: "It is hard to empathize with people who seem Other, and it is hard to sympathize with those we cannot empathize with" (Wilkie-Stibbs 2008, p. 21).⁸

⁷ Children's picture books are read on two levels, independently from each other: Adults read the text (textual level) and children "read" the pictures (pictorial level). A number of researchers have listed specific characteristics of children's literature, e.g. Judith Hillman, p. 3 (typical childhood experiences from a child's perspective, children/childlike characters, simple and direct plots that focus on action, optimism/happy endings, combining reality and fantasy). Perry Nodelman also lists a number of characteristics (also including didactics); on the other hand he emphasizes the complex relationships between different definitions of children's literature and comes to the conclusion that children's literature claims to be void of adult content, but it is always there: "This means that texts of children's literature can be and often are as complex as texts for adults – but the complexity is of a very specific and quite different sort" (p. 341).

⁸ This "turning around" of the perspective in order to make the readers (the children) empathise with the refugee's situation is also obvious in the Swedish picture book *Flykten – en bok om att tvingas lämna allt* by Mía Hellquist Forss: It begins with a very "Swedish" setting: Appearance of the characters, nature, the apartment area and the grocery store look

In *Wasims Weste* (Offermann & Tilly 2017), the father takes the decision that the family has to leave, and they travel by bus and boat. Unfortunately the grandparents feel too old to accompany the family, but the grandmother gives eight-year-old Wasim a vest that plays an important role in reminding him of home: “Die Weste ist aus lauter Stoffresten, aus einer Hose, die Opa nicht mehr passt und aus Omas altem Kleid” [The vest is made of nothing but scraps of fabrics, of a pair of pants that don’t fit Grandpa anymore and of Grandma’s dress]. As in the other books, the family has to cross the sea, and Wasim and the adults on the boat feel very frightened. At the time the story is told, Wasim and his family are living in asylum in accommodation with other refugees, but soon they are to move into their own flat. In *Amani, sieh nicht zurück* (Holle 2016), a very life-like story is told from the perspective of the young girl Amani. The family lives in Syria and the reader learns about life when the war begins – about bombs falling as children make their way to school and about the decision – to leave or not – that has to be taken by the adults. The father wakes Amani in the night to tell her that they have to go away and so their journey begins. The only text where the main character is ready to leave is *Nusret und die Kuh* (Tuckermann 2016). Here the boy Nusret, who lives with his grandparents in an idyllic, self-sufficient village in Kosovo, decides himself when it is time to leave. His parents already live in Germany and they write letters, that he (and also the grandparents) should come because he has to go to school. The motivation to leave is to learn to read and write: “Da denke ich: Ja, ich gehe nach Deutschland und lerne lesen und schreiben, und die Kuh nehme ich mit, damit ich wenigstens etwas von zu Hause bei mir habe” [Then I think: Yes, I will go to Germany and learn to read and write, and I will take the cow with me so I can have at least something from home with me].

Another central issue when it comes to children and childhood is the family. In almost all of the analysed books, it is the members

very “Swedish” and the children have typically Swedish names (Jonas and Sara). Then the mother wakes the children in the middle of the night without explanation and they leave their home very quickly in a car with an unknown man driving and their escape from a war that the children were not aware of begins.

of the nuclear family that are the main characters: Mother and/or Father and one or more children. Only Karlinchen in *Karlinchen. Ein Kind auf der Flucht* has no family and must run away on her own and “niemand kümmerte sich um ein Kind, das allein war und voll Angst” [nobody cared about a lonely and very scared child]. In this book, there are – as mentioned in the introduction – non-human figures with central functions: Catfishes, waxwings and crows. Karlinchen asks them all for safety, but they send her away. In children’s literature, small creatures, toys and other things are often used as substitutes for humans. These subjects are categorised neither as child nor as adult, neither as full human nor as full animal, and can thus be seen as representations of the child’s otherness according to Druker (2017, p. 214–215). The characters are often incapable of influencing society at large, and stories with these kinds of characters can thus be seen as a form of social criticism. As mentioned above, the cat E.T. in *Flucht* is the narrator and thus has an important role when it comes to the reader and the human beings in this book.⁹

In *Aminah gehört zu uns* (Möntzer 2017) the reader knows nothing about the journey and thus the premise differs from the other books. This story is told by the German girl Ida who gets to know the new girl in the class, Aminah, who has come with her parents to Germany from Syria. In *Zugvögel* (Roher 2016) as well, the journey has already been made as Luka welcomes the migratory birds when they arrive to the tree where he lives. However, the migratory birds have to leave once again when the autumn comes. One of them, Paulinchen, does not want to leave and at the end she stays with Luka and Frau Lorenz, who has a big bird’s nest for those who do not know where to go (“Sie hat ein großes Nest für alle, die nicht wissen, wohin”).

The Arrival

As mentioned above, an increasing number of narratives about children on the move have been published in recent years. This topic, however, is nothing new:

⁹ There are several examples of non-human characters in children’s literature on this topic in other languages as well – for instance, *Om du skulle fråga Micha* in Swedish, where all the figures are scissors.

The most common story for young people is a circular journey, in which a central child character leaves home in search of an adventure or is pushed out of an ordinary home by the behavior of powerful adults, journeys to an unfamiliar place, and, after a series of exciting and/or dangerous experiences, either returns home, or chooses to claim the unfamiliar space as a new home. (Reimer 2013b, p. 2)

What differs from earlier narratives about children on the move is that the original home in most of the stories does not exist anymore. Accordingly, the children do not have the choice of returning home or naming the unfamiliar space his or her new home. They have to accept that they arrive in a foreign place, that they get a new ‘home’. They have to find happy endings “or at least, narrative closure – in remaining homeless at the end of their stories” (Reimer 2013b, p. 2), which very often results in homesickness and a state of sorrow.¹⁰ Below some of the difficulties that may occur due to the arrival in a foreign place are discussed and if/how these are thematised and/or problematised in the books.

Learning a New Language

In *Flucht* the family talks about the language difficulties to come while sitting in the boat out at sea. The mother tells the children that they are going to learn a new language, “das gehört dazu” [that is part of it], and that they will have special teachers for learning the new language. When the young girl Suzie asks how they are going to understand the teachers, it takes a while before the father answers: “Die Menschen werden euch verstehen – am Anfang mit den Herzen [The people will understand you – in the beginning with their hearts]. The father touches on a subject that may be even more difficult than different languages, namely the will to understand foreigners. This is also thematised in *Karlinchen. Ein Kind auf der Flucht*: Karlinchen does not arrive in a foreign language culture but still has communication problems because of her otherness; the crows do not understand her because she is not like them. In other books we can follow the language learning more as a process that takes time, such as in

¹⁰ According to Johannisson (2016), homesickness is like sorrow but lacks the status of sorrow.

Zugvögel: “Luka lernte die Vögel immer besser verstehen und auch Paulinchen konnte schon ein paar Sätze in Lukas Sprache” [Luka learned to understand the birds better and better, and Paulinchen too could already say a few sentences in Lukas’s language]. Wasim (*Wasims Weste*) has a teacher in Mrs Hubert in the asylum accommodation, who teaches the children German words and the funniest words like “Rettungsweste” [life jacket] and “Blumentopf” [flowerpot] Wasim and his sister whisper to each other before they fall asleep. Nevertheless, the learning of a new language is also a challenging process. Rahaf (*Bestimmt wird alles gut*) is very frustrated when her teacher explains things to her and she does not understand (but she has decided not to cry). However, a girl in the class teaches her by pointing at things and saying their names, a process that is ongoing: “Emma hat Rahaf auch am nächsten Tag wieder Wörter gesagt” [The next day too Emma taught Rahaf words] and after two years in Germany she can speak almost as good German as she does Arabic. In *Amani, sieh nicht zurück*, we have a similar situation with the Syrian girl Amani, who is taught by her friend Emma at school. In this book (written in parallel in German and Arabic like *Bestimmt wird alles gut*), we also have a metalevel: At the end of the book Emma gives Amani a book in German and Arabic (like *Amani, sieh nicht zurück!*) so that they can read together and understand the text. Also, the girl, Ida (*Aminah gehört zu uns*), is obviously prepared to teach the Syrian girl Aminah. She does not expect Aminah to speak German, so she speaks very slowly, whereupon Aminah gets angry: “Mit mir kannst du normal sprechen, ich bin doch nicht blöd” [“You can talk normally to me, I’m not stupid”].

Identity and Being the Other

In several of the books, feelings of being a foreigner or otherness are thematised. The concept of “otherness” has arisen from the theories of postcolonialism. In *Orientalism* (first published 1978), Edward Said discusses the dichotomy between East and West (where the Orient, i.e. the East, was depicted as the irrational, psychologically weak, and feminised, non-European “Other” in contrast to the rational, psychologically strong, and masculine West, i.e. the Europeans) that arose as a result of producing a discourse of “difference”. Posti points out that travel literature

has a tendency to focus on differences: “instead of noting the similarities between the ‘we’ that the narrator considers himself belonging to and ‘those’ who he meets during his journey or adventure, diversities and differences are described the more detailed” (Posti 2017, p. 184).¹¹ In the analysed books, the otherness is more or less pronounced, but in some way it is there in all the stories, for instance when Amani (*Amani, sieh nicht zurück*) feels homesick because everything in Germany is different from home: The weather is cold, she is freezing and the food does not taste of anything at all (p. 56). After a while in the new school, she still feels alone because there are so many things she does not understand (p. 60). The differences also appear clearly when Karlinchen is first being very kindly received at the places where she seeks protection. Then it turns out that she is different from the catfishes, the waxwings and the crows, and she has to leave because she is a foreigner and not like them. In *Aminah gehört zu uns*, Aminah’s otherness even leads to bullying by older children at school. This makes Aminah afraid of going to school, but Ida and the other classmates defend her and come to pick her up in the mornings even though they have to make a detour. One day Lea (one of the older children who is harassing Aminah) tells the others she is going to Kenya and that gives Ida an opportunity to make Lea reflect on her behaviour:

“Ich fahre in den Herbstferien ganz weit weg. Nach Kenia, das liegt in Afrika“, sagte sie stolz. „Hoffentlich sind die Leute da nicht so gemein zu dir wie du zu Aminah“, platzte ich heraus. „Da haben nämlich alle dunkle Haut. Außer dir.“ Da bekam Lea einen ganz roten Kopf. [“In the holiday, I’m going far away. To Kenya, that’s in Africa”, she said proudly. “I hope that the people over there are not so mean to you like you are to Aminah”, I burst out. “Over there all the people have dark skin. Except you.” By this point, Lea had turned red.]

It is not stated whether Lea’s unfriendliness is due to a fear of foreigners or not; however, she has to give up her unfriendliness.

¹¹ Original quotation: “i stället för att notera likheterna mellan det ‘vi’ som berättaren anser sig tillhöra och ‘de’ som berättaren träffar på under sin resa eller sitt äventyr, beskrivs olikheter och skillnader desto utförligare” (Posti 2017, p. 184). Translation from Swedish into English: Anneli Fjordevik.

In *Zugvögel*, Frau Lorenz tries to explain to Paulinchen why some people are unfriendly to foreigners: “Viele Leute haben Angst vor Fremden. Angst davor, mit ihnen zu teilen und sich für sie zu interessieren” [Many people are afraid of foreigners. Afraid of sharing things with them and afraid of showing interest in them].

Some of the protagonists worry about the work identity of their parents. Wasim (*Wasims Weste*) does his best to keep his father (who is a hairdresser) happy by letting him cut his hair, even if it is not needed, because “beim Haareschneiden wird er immer fröhlich” [when he cuts people’s hair, he is always happy]. His mother gets a sewing machine and starts to sew for them and for other people, which makes her smile sometimes, much to Wasim’s great relief. In *Bestimmt wird alles gut*, the father is not allowed to work as a doctor, so he often just sits doing nothing, which affects the children (and the mother): “Wenn Papa so traurig ist, sind die Kinder auch alle traurig. Und Mama auch” (p. 41) [When Dad is so sad, the children are all sad too. And Mum too]. Implicitly, the children long for everyday things, like having parents who go to work, living in a flat (and not in asylum accommodation) and going to school.

Expectations for the New Life

On the boat trip in *Flucht*, there are a lot of flashbacks of the life back home, discussions about the future (school, work, language, etc.) and questions as to whether or not they are doing the right thing. The young boy Daniel asks his father if they are going to have a piano in their new home; of course, answers the father, and they will also have lights and dimmers, which he has already ordered. Only the cat E.T. notices that the father is lying. Here, the reader realises that the adults know things that the children may not know (or will come to know). The father probably tries to live up to the expectations or wishes of the children when he lies, but he himself knows that the new life will not be easy. In the same book, the cat E.T. summarises the feelings of the family when they finally reach land after the dangerous journey on the sea: “Meine Menschen wollen glücklich sein, aber sie wissen nicht, wie” [My people want to feel happy, but they don’t know how]. They probably want to feel happy to feel confident about the decision to leave home, but the uncertainty that they feel is obvious:

Unsicher werfen sie einander Blicke zu. Dabei kreuzen sich ihre fragenden Blicke mit jenen der Menschen in den vorbeigleitenden Booten. [Uncertainly, they look at each other. Their questioning eyes meet the eyes of the people in the passing boats who also feel uncertain].

Also, in *Bestimmt wird alles gut*, the uncertainty is obvious when a woman on the train to Germany complains about the family in an unpleasant way because one of the small sisters is crying. “So sind die Menschen hier doch nicht” (p. 27) [That’s not the way people are here], the mother whispers to Rahaf, but Rahaf can see that the mother is crying. This worries her because mothers do not cry. When the conductor comes, they are afraid but have to admit that they are travelling without tickets, because they are from Syria and have no money left. The conductor just smiles, wishes them good luck and goes on to the next wagon. They wait for him to come back, but then they realise that they do not have to pay. The father smiles and says that this is the way people are in this country: “Jetzt wird alles gut” (p. 29) [Now everything will be ok].

Happy Endings as the Norm

A characteristic of children’s literature is the “feeling of optimism and innocence” which makes the happy ending be “the norm” (Hillman 1999, p. 3) in fiction for young readers, even though it has become less black and white since the 1960s. In the analysed books, we can see feelings of optimism at the end in all of them, sometimes with a clear message like in *Aminah gehört zu uns*, where it is stated that Aminah belongs to them [Ida and her friends] and that many young children can be stronger than a few older children: “Wir sind nämlich ganz schön viele!” [There’s actually quite a lot of us]. However, even though life in the new home seems to be fine upon first sight, there are often feelings of insecurity and confusion as well as duality that can occur when one lives with two different cultures, such as with the boy Nusret in *Nusret und die Kuh*. Nusret seems to be accepted right away in his new homeland; immediately, he makes friends with whom he speaks German (probably his parents have already prepared him for a life in Germany since they already live there). Everything seems fine but in the last letter to the grandparents

back in Kosovo, he reflects on the duality or so-called third space or third culture that migrators often feel: “Ich bin gern bei Mama und Papa und Lirije und Liridon und auch bei euch, aber ich weiß, das geht nicht gleichzeitig” [I love being with Mum and Dad and Lirije and Liridon and also with you, but I know, that is not possible all at the same time]. Bhabha (2004) explains the uniqueness of each person, actor or context as a “hybrid” (p. 55) in the space theory; a cultural “third space”, where children like Nusret often are mentally located.¹² The uncertainty is also present when the family in *Flucht* finally arrives after a long boat trip: In the pictures, we can see palm trees, a tent with the Muslim moon (as stated above, the family goes to Africa to seek protection from the war) and a big sign with “Refugees welcome” on it. The family looks for familiar faces but finds nobody they know. The author leaves the reader with the sense of confusion and insecurity that the refugees themselves probably feel.

In *Bestimmt wird alles gut, Wasims Weste* and *Amani, sieh nicht zurück*, where similar stories about a journey from Syria with a stay at asylum accommodation en route to a “real” home are told, the endings also have similarities. In *Bestimmt wird alles gut*, the children start school in a small town and the language problems as well as the father’s unemployment are highlighted as mentioned above. The narrator Rahaf sometimes feel homesick, but she is hopeful that everything will be better:

Aber bestimmt geht das eines Tages vorbei. Und bestimmt kriegen sie eines Tages auch eine schöne Wohnung. Und Papa darf wieder arbeiten. Bestimmt. (p. 42) [But certainly it will come to an end one day. And certainly they will also get a nice flat one day. And Dad will be allowed to work again. Certainly.]

Also, Amani in *Amani, sieh nicht zurück* is homesick but has found a new friend and most importantly, she has found peace. The story ends with her and her friend Emma reading a book together about a girl on the move. The book is in German and Arabic so that they both understand, and it is stated that Emma now understands how difficult it was for Amani to leave home

¹² See also Boëthius (2010) on Finnish child refugees during the World War II, *Hemma längtar jag bort, borta längtar jag hem*.

and settle in a foreign place. *Wasims Weste* is open-ended, with Wasim and his family living in asylum accommodation, although they will soon move to a flat. He misses his grandparents and friends back home, but he is also looking forward to school and getting to know other children. *Zugvögel* has a clearly happy ending. The young bird Paulinchen is allowed to stay with Luka (who is not a migrating bird) and does not have to leave with the other birds. However, she is warned by her protector, Frau Lorenz, that it is not going to be easy because of the fear of foreigners that many people have. Frau Lorenz also points out that Luka is not like them. Luka nods and puts his arm around Paulinchen. It begins to snow and everyone is happy.

Conclusion

As stated above, the narratives about children’s journeys and arrivals in a migration context include the home-away-home theme. However, the last home – or homecoming – is not always there. The journeys were mostly forced and the families cannot return to their home countries. In this sense Nusret’s status is different; he was born after the migration of the family and he has a choice to migrate himself and also to return. Also Paulinchen in *Zugvögel* differs from most of the stories in this sense: she chooses not to leave. The children who did not have this choice – the parents made the decision to leave – stay in a kind of no man’s land, which may be difficult for them to call home, like Wasim (*Wasims Weste*), Amani (*Amani, sieh nicht zurück!*) and Rahaf (*Bestimmt wird alles gut*). Even though the journeys sometimes are portrayed more as adventures than traumas like Warnqvist (2016) concludes and even though life in the new home country seems to be fine upon first sight, there are often feelings of uncertainty (like in *Flucht*) and confusion that may occur when one grows up as a “third culture kid”, a term coined by Ruth Useem in the 50s. Even though the third culture kid-space gives these children a sense of belonging, a mental place in the world, where they do not feel like “the other” or like foreigners¹³, there are short

¹³ See also the anthology *Third Culture Kids* (2017) by Ra Hidaya Modig and the article in *Dagens Nyheter* (2 October 2017), where Iskias Kashay says: ”När jag åker till Etiopien känner jag mig utanför, och när jag

mentions of not belonging anywhere or, like for Nusret, a wish to be in two places at the same time. In several stories the children's worries about the future are depicted through the behavior of the adults. They are – like the children – very afraid when they sit in small boats on the sea, and they cry and wonder whether or not they made the right decision. When they arrive in the new country, they do not have jobs, which makes them question their identity, and this affects the children. Also difficulties like learning a new language, homesickness and feelings of otherness are found in all of the stories. Instead of noting the similarities that may be present, diversities and differences are noted by the figures in the books. In *Aminah gehört zu uns*, the otherness even leads to bullying by older children at school. The narrative in all of the stories may sometimes be quite simple, but the sentences often contain formulations that encourage deeper understanding or reflection (such as when the cat E.T. in *Flucht* notes that “his people” want to feel happy, but they do not know how) and the illustrations are very effective and moving.

All the books discussed above have happy endings or at least the feeling of optimism that is characteristic of children's literature. Kevin Brooks, Carnegie winner 2014, says that children “do not need their books to have ‘patronizing’ happy endings”; they should learn “life is not always all right in the end” (Furness 2014). However, literature that deals with difficult topics such as migration, to which many children can relate, may differ somewhat from other literature in that way. This literature is about real people, real stories and real boat trips that have been made by thousands of children, and for many of them there is no way back. In these stories, the happy ending may be patronising, but it probably has to give the young readers (and the “hidden” adults) at least a glimmer of hope, just to reassure them that their decision was the right decision, that everything certainly (“bestimmt”) will be fine one day.

kommer till Sverige känner jag mig inte som svensk. Så jag har typ ingen plats. Men med ”third culture kid” finns det en tillhörighet.” [When I go to Ethiopia, I feel like an outsider and when I come to Sweden, I do not feel like a Swede. So there is like no place for me. But with the “third culture kid” there is a sense of belonging.] Translation from Swedish into English: Anneli Fjordevik.

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