

**Thomas Kullmann (ed.)**

**Violence in English Children's  
and Young Adults' Fiction**

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Phone: 0049/2407/9596-0 • Telefax: 0049/2407/9596-9

Internet: [www.shaker.de](http://www.shaker.de) • e-mail: [info@shaker.de](mailto:info@shaker.de)

Violence has long been one of the most controversial issues of children's and young adults' literature criticism. The present volume approaches the issue of violence in children's and young adults' fiction in English from the points of view of literary and cultural studies. The twelve contributions to this volume reflect the wide variety of English-language texts which have been offered to children and young adults in the last a hundred and fifty years. The books discussed range from R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858) and George MacDonald's *The Princess and Curdie* (1882) to J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007) and Derek Landy's *Dark Days* (2010) from the *Skulduggery Pleasant* series. Some of the contributions are devoted to fairy tales; others to historical novels, , to adventure stories and to various forms of fantasy. While all the contributions focus on close textual analyses of children's and young adults' fiction, connections are established to extensive contexts, such as ancient mythology, German and Persian fairy tales, and present-day political discourses.

While the articles collected touch upon a wide variety of topics, they also complement one another with respect to some of the central issues. Children's and young adults' fiction, it appears, depicts young people as both victims and perpetrators of violence. Usually, it is 'the others' who are violent and against whom the protagonists have to guard themselves.. Fairy tales, adventure stories, tales of fantasy and (to a certain degree) historical novels share the motif that aggression and violence are often coupled with a low state of civilization and a lack of intelligence. Other stories, however, recognize the potential for violence inherent in human nature, in ourselves as opposed to 'the others', and thus focus on the individual's self-control and responsible choices.

As some of the articles suggest, the connection between the adventures related in the books and the exigencies of real life is a metaphorical one: violence in fantasy literature, we realize, can stand for the dangers and troubles of real life; fighting obviously indicates or 'externalizes' young people's efforts (usually non-violent) to be successful in life.

The analysis of the motif of violence, as undertaken in the present volume, demonstrates the enormous potential of children's and young adults' fiction, and fantasy fiction in particular, for discussing basic issues of human life. It also shows that English and American children's and young adults' fiction constitutes a highly fruitful field of literary and cultural research.