

Call for Papers

DIEGESIS 15.2, winter 2026

Date of publication: December 2026

Topic: "Narrating Childhood"

Special issue with guest editors:

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Deadline for the submission of abstracts: October 15th, 2025

Deadline for the submission of articles: June 30th, 2026

About the TOPIC:

The experiences we have in childhood lay the foundation for the rest of our lives. They have profound effects on our physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development, lasting well into adulthood (UNICEF 2003, 7). Recalling and narrating our childhood therefore represents an anthropological need, particularly in times of crisis, when the notion of a happy and carefree childhood increasingly disappears and becomes an object of longing (Salmose 2018, 333f.).

This special issue of *DIEGESIS* explores the forms and functions of childhood narratives across different genres and media, cultures, and historical periods. In addition to texts featuring heterodiegetic narration with children as protagonists or reflector figures whose childhood constitutes a central part of the storyline

(Hofmann 2010, 104), homodiegetic narrators who reflect on their own childhood occupy a special position: from unborn narrators speaking from within their mothers' wombs to toddlers and schoolchildren exploring their surroundings, to adolescents and young adults who no longer wish to be children, to elderly or ill narrators recalling their lives and childhood before death, and even to those who have died in childhood and speak to their grieving parents from the afterlife.

Case studies on migration and exile literature, on international family histories and childhoods between languages and cultures, are just as welcome as contributions from Gender, Queer, and Disability Studies. Topics may include forced marriages of girls in patriarchal societies, entry into adolescence in coming-of-age or coming-out novels, and everyday stories of children with disabilities. Furthermore, studies of children's and young adult literature are of particular interest, as the topic of childhood is inherent to these genres due to their intended audience. The same applies to all-age texts such as fairy tales, which form the first literary experience for many children (Spinner 2020, 55), and their media adaptations within the realm of Disney Studies, especially since many fairy-tale characters are themselves children.

Against the backdrop of the literary tradition of childhood narratives, rooted in the fairy tales of the 17th and 18th centuries, the reformist pedagogical image of childhood by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the emergence of the *Bildungsroman* (Hervouet-Farrar 2011, 11), this special issue of *DIEGESIS* offers numerous points of departure for new research perspectives on the diversity and complexity of how childhood is narrated.

Potential questions include the relationship between children's narrative and experiential worlds and the historical, political, and sociocultural conditions in which they grow up; autobiographical influences drawn from the authors' own childhoods; individual or collective processes of coping with the past and with trauma; and interdisciplinary approaches – e.g., from sociology, psychology, and linguistics, concerning the marginalization and social participation of children, their emotional and social development from birth to puberty, and their use of language. Further questions include: What does childhood mean in different cultural contexts? How do characters deal with the "inner child" within themselves

(Bradshaw 1990)? How are childhood memories spatialized and temporalized? And how does the act of recollecting and narrating one's childhood affect personal development? As a journal for narrative research, *DIEGESIS* is particularly interested in narratological approaches, such as analyses of authentic and immediate, but also unreflective and unreliable narration by children who offer their own perspective on the world of adults.

We invite abstracts of approximately 350–400 words by October 15th, 2025 at the latest. Please send your abstract, along with a brief CV, to the editorial team of *DIEGESIS*: diegesis@uni-wuppertal.de. The editorial team and the editors will decide on the acceptability of proposals by December 19th, 2025. Contributions have to be submitted by June 30th, 2026. The issue will be published in December 2026.

In addition, we always welcome REVIEWS of new works (i.e. works published in the last three to four years) in the field of narratology; we specifically welcome cross-disciplinary contributions in addition to contributions from those working in the fields of language and literature. Recommendations for reviews can be sent to the aforementioned e-mail address at any time; in your e-mail, you should name the book(s) you would like to review and provide a brief overview of your academic career.

Furthermore, we would also like to invite suggestions for CONFERENCE REPORTS on any events in the field of narrative research. If you want to send us proposals for such reports please include brief information on the topic, venue, date, and organizers of the event as well as a short outline of your academic career.

About *DIEGESIS*:

DIEGESIS is the first interdisciplinary journal dedicated to narrative research that provides free online access to full-text articles and reviews (www.diegesis.uni-wuppertal.de). The high standard of work published in *DIEGESIS* is ensured by a combination of competitive calls for papers and a peer review process.

DIEGESIS is published at the University of Wuppertal and in cooperation with the local Centre for Narrative Research (CNR) (www.zef.uni-wuppertal.de) by Matei Chihai (Romance Studies), Sandra Heinen (English Literature and Media Studies), Matías Martínez (German Literature), Katharina Rennhak (English Literature), Michael Scheffel (Comparative Literature), and Roy Sommer (English Literature).

Works Cited

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UNICEF = United Nations Children's Fund (2003): *Early Childhood Development. UNICEF Vision for Every Child*. New York, NY.