Narrating Environmental Citizenship

Norwegian picturebooks and comics in the Anthropocene

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Summary in Norwegian

I denne avhandlingen utforsker jeg hvordan aspekter av «environmental citizenship», eller miljømedborgerskap, er tematisert i norske bildebøker og tegneserier. I sammenheng med dette undersøker jeg hvordan tekstene inviterer leserne til å leve seg inn i den tekstuelle verden («storyworld»), og hvordan utdanningsrelaterte aspekter former en del av disse tekstuelle verdener når det gjelder spørsmålet om hva det betyr å være en miljøbevisst medborger. Jeg argumenterer i denne avhandlingen for at konsepter av miljømedborgerskap kan hjelpe oss å diskutere og identifisere fortellingsstrukturer som behandler forholdet mellom menneskene og verden de lever i.

Tekstutvalget mitt består av syv multimodale tekster (fire bildebøker og tre tegneserier), skrevet av norske forfattere og publisert mellom 1974 og 2019. Tekstene blir diskutert i kronologisk rekkefølge. Jeg begynner med *Det Blå Folket og Karamellfabrikken* av Tor Åge Bringsværd (1974) og tar deretter for meg *Blekkulf blir miljødetektiv* av Bente Roestad (1994). Den tredje analysen undersøker fem eksempler fra tegneserien *Nemi* av Lise Myhre (2010), mens den fjerde tar for seg tre fortellinger fra *Donald Duck*, skrevet av Terje Nordberg (2010; 2011; 2012). Bildeboken *Nina lærer gjenbruk* av Antonella Durante (2018) utgjør den femte litterære analysen, og så følger analysen av en spesialutgave av tegneserien *The Urban Legend* av Josef Tzegai Yohannes (2019) og Kari Stais (2019) bildebok *Jakob og Neikob: Stormen*.

Som første steg i avhandlingens teoridel presenter jeg i kapittel 2 forskjellige konsepter av miljømedborgerskap som har sitt opphav i statsvitenskap. Konseptene bygger på ulike forståelser av medborgerskap, preget av liberale, republikanske og filosofiske teorier om medborgerskap. Mens det i økokritisk forskning ofte blir forutsatt en underliggende forståelse av hva som er ment med begreper som for eksempel «miljømedborgerskap» eller «økomedborgerskap», understreker den store variasjonen i forskjellige konsepter av miljømedborgerskap at det trengs et mer nyansert blikk på hvordan litterære tekster problematiserer denne tematikken.

Min teoretiske tilnærming til tekstutvalget er basert på kognitiv narratologi og økonarratologi, som jeg diskuterer i kapittel 3. Med utgangspunkt i kapitlene 2 og 3 formulerer jeg i kapittel 4 en analysemodell som strukturerer mine tekstanalyser. Avhandlingen avslutter med en sammenlignende drøfting av resultatene fra de syv analysekapitlene. Her viser det seg at multimodale tekster

for unge lesere tematiserer varierte aspekter av miljømedborgerskap og presenterer ulike forståelser av hva det betyr å være en miljøbevisst medborger. Både liberale, republikanske og mer filosofiske konsepter av miljømedborgerskap er omhandlet i tekstene. Dette viser at forskjellige aspekter av miljømedborgerskap ikke bare er til stede i teorifeltet, men også i estetiske og kulturelle framstillinger av hva det kan bety å leve et mer miljøbevisst liv. Variasjonen i tekstene understreker at en mer nyansert undersøkelse av bildebøker og tegneserier er både fruktbar og nødvendig, siden antakelsen om en underliggende forståelse av miljømedborgerskap overser kompleksiteten av både konseptet og litteraturen.

Contents

1 Introduction

Humans live in a world full of narratives. These narratives are not only written texts that concern and affect us, but they also have an impact on us in terms of our identity. Who we are and what we make of life are stories that we tell ourselves and others. Benedict Anderson (1999) and Homi K. Bhabha (1990) argue that even a national community is essentially a narrative construction based on stories and myths that people share and collectively believe in. Citizenship, which involves being a member of a certain community, is no different. Literature has always played an important role in defining both a collective and personal identity and what it means to be a citizen, especially a "good" citizen. During the latter half of the 20th century, environmental problems have become an important issue in our everyday lives. Consequently, literature too is more and more often concerned with the climate crisis and how we define ourselves and our relationship to the world we live in, along with all its human and nonhuman inhabitants. The coinage of the term "Anthropocene" by the scientists Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer in the year 2000 has challenged us to face the fact that humans have become an important geological factor (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000) and that our impact on the planet cannot be overestimated. This means that we must rethink our role on Earth, both in relation to our surroundings and in our relationships to other human beings. Literature, as a central part of human life, also plays a decisive role here. How can we define ourselves as citizens today? What perspectives do we have on society and what constitutes our personal and collective identity in the face of anthropogenic environmental and climatic change?

My research project takes an ecocritical approach to Norwegian children's and young adult literature to investigate aspects of environmental citizenship in literary works, and to find out how various forms of citizenship are being narrated in relation to environmental questions. In this work, I focus specifically on picturebooks[1] and comics to find out how multimodal texts that are designed for young audiences narrate using the two modalities of verbal text and pictures. My research is specifically focused on the question of how literary works portray

[1] In her introduction to the *Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer (2018) points to the controversy regarding the spelling of the term "picturebook" as one or two words. Following her argumentation about "the particularities of the picturebook as a unique art form" (p. 4.), as well as her recognition of multiple other scholars' use of the term as one word, I will also use the spelling in one word throughout this thesis.

different forms of citizenship vis-à-vis the environmental crisis. In connection with this, I also investigate how these texts invite readers to immerse themselves into storyworlds, and how educational aspects of the texts form part of these storyworlds in relation to the question of what it means to be an environmentally responsible citizen. My argument is that concepts of environmental citizenship can help us to discuss and identify narrative structures that take up relationships between humans, and the relationship between humans and the world they inhabit. In my project, I combine an ecocritical approach with concepts of environmental citizenship as developed in the political sciences. Even though environmental citizenship has been touched upon in ecocritical research, these two areas of investigation have previously not been brought together as closely and as extensively as they are in my project. To analyze the seven literary texts that form the corpus for my project, I use econarratology, since it is not only concerned with the form of narratives but also with the reader's emotional response. This is especially interesting when it comes to multimodal stories because of the interplay between verbal text and pictures that is central to the mental construction of the storyworlds I examine. Since the term econarratology was coined by Erin James (2015) in her book *The Storyworld Accord*, multimodal narratives have not yet been a focus of study in the field, which is something my project seeks to change. Furthermore, examining Norwegian literature might contribute to widening the range of narratives that econarratological research pays attention to.

In my project, I will also consider how the texts approach readers on a didactic level. In connection to this, it will also be relevant to discuss how the concept of "environmental citizenship" can be connected to the new national curriculum for schools, which in the subject of Norwegian has an emphasis on interdisciplinary topics such as "bærekraftig utvikling" (sustainable development) and "demokrati og medborgerskap" (democracy and citizenship).

1.1 Background and current state of research

My research project finds itself at the intersection of various areas of study. Talking about environmental citizenship in children's literature involves considering the social and historical context of both the texts and their readers. The literature I examine in my project covers the period between the 1970s and 2019. The time around the year 1970 saw some fundamental changes in the collective perception of the environment and a growing global awareness of environmental

problems. Environmental initiatives were established, Earth Day was initiated, and the 1970s came to be known as an ecological decade in the USA and other countries (Radkau, 2011, pp. 7, 168, 121). In addition, an awareness of the planet as an entity was sparked in the late 1960s and early 1970s by the first pictures of Earth taken from space (Heise, 2008, p. 22). From that time onwards, international conferences (such as the Stockholm Conference in 1972 or the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992) and agreements (such as the Kyoto Protocol, which was adopted in 1997 and entered into force in 2005; UNFCCC, 2022) have brought environmental problems and the issue of climate change more and more into public debates. These developments underline the growing understanding of the impact humans have on the planet and on the environments they inhabit.

A discussion that is connected to this topic concerns education. Environmental topics have been part of schooling for several decades, and they have also started to be incorporated into language teaching. The complexity of terms such as "Anthropocene" underline how humans' impact on the planet must be viewed in a broader context because it touches upon different areas of our lives. This also means that an interdisciplinary approach to the environment in an educational context is important to understanding how our actions are connected to each other and to the world we inhabit. Younger generations in particular will have to deal with the challenges posed by changing environments and will therefore need to be environmentally educated in order to be able to handle life. This makes fictional texts for young people especially interesting. Literature is an important part of education on different levels, and according to narratologist David Herman, it helps children to "acquire more strategies for getting to know [the real world – B. H.]" (Herman, 2002, p. 111). One part of the real world that children get to know through literature is society, which relates to the question of how we might find a place in the world around us. Narratives about different worlds – fantastic and realistic, past and future – all invite readers to draw connections between the storyworlds they immerse themselves in on the one hand and the actual world and the time they live in on the other. At the same time, readers react to what they read on a cognitive and an emotional level. This is another issue that is especially interesting when it comes to literature for young readers, because they are still much more in the process of developing their cognitive abilities than adult readers. Examining how narratives invite young readers to construct storyworlds and how they might react to them is therefore an exciting undertaking, especially when it comes to environmental questions, not

least because of the various ideological aspects that come into play in matters of education and the environment, including education for sustainable development.

Ecocritical research in literary studies has been constantly growing since it became institutionalized as a field of study in the 1990s, and indeed since the term *ecocriticism* was coined by William Rueckert (1978). Ecocriticism examines various types of texts, with a focus on the question of how nonhuman nature, its changes, and human interaction with it are described on a textual level (Bühler, 2016). A unitary definition of the field has proven to be difficult, since the subject of ecocriticism is vast and difficult to grasp. The most commonly used definition of ecocriticism to date comes from the 1996 landmark publication *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm:

> Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xviii)

This definition is quite general, but it emphasizes ecocriticism's focus on the physical world and its relation to literature. Lawrence Buell (2011) points to the fact that the persistency of this broad description of ecocriticism is related to its "reluctance to insist on a single normative, programmatic definition of its rightful scope, method, and stakes" (p. 88). Since the 1990s, ecocriticism as a field of studies has grown, and Greg Garrard (2012) therefore suggests an even broader definition of the term: "the widest definition of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself" (p. 5). Thus, Garrard's take on ecocriticism does not even limit the field to the study of literary texts but includes humans' cultural history in general.

The development of ecocriticism, with its different trends, has been described using the metaphor of a wave. Lawrence Buell (2005) identifies two main waves to denote the key characteristics of earlier and later ecocriticism, although it is important to note that these waves are not to be thought of as chronologically separate phenomena that followed each other. Significant trends

from early ecocritical work do continue to play a role today, even if other directions may now characterize the field more definitively.

Buell (2005) writes that "[f]or first-wave ecocriticism, 'environment' effectively meant 'natural environment'" (p. 21) and classifies the first wave as characterized by research with a focus on nature writing and the experience of, for example, the wilderness, with Henry David Thoreau and John Muir as two key figures in this context. He identifies two main paths that first-wave ecocriticism took, namely the path of "deep ecology" coined by Arne Næss on the one hand, and the efforts to "try to make literary theory and criticism more scientifically informed" (Buell, 2011, p. 90) on the other hand. With its strong focus on British romantic poetry and US nature writing, Buell argues that, within ecocriticism, there has been a long-lasting focus on Anglophone texts by a largely Anglo-American scholarly community. This imbalance has since started to decrease, but it continues to be an issue in ecocritical research.

Buell places the beginning of the predominance of the second wave of ecocriticism around the turn of the millennium and links it to a stronger focus on cultural theories and studies. Ecocriticism started to concern itself with topics such as health, and a shift toward urban rather than rural landscapes, as well as a stronger focus on sociocentric rather than ecocentric topics, could be observed (Buell, 2011, p. 94). Second-wave ecocriticism critically scrutinized its own theoretical foundations and critiqued earlier positions in the field. Timothy Morton and Dana Phillips are two scholars who Buell names as representative of the stronger theorization of the field. Another important topic that entered ecocriticism was that of environmental justice, which will also be of some importance in the literary analyses in this thesis. As ecocriticism started to thematize social questions, the issue of an imbalance between the rich and the poor, the Global North and the Global South, became more central in the field. A landmark publication in this context was *The Environmental Justice Reader* from 2002. Buell calls the engagement with environmental justice "second-wave ecocriticism's most distinctive activist agenda" (Buell, 2011, p. 96).

Scott Slovic (2010) even identifies a third wave of ecocriticism that is characterized, for example, by "global concepts of place […]; strong comparatist impulses [that] are raising questions about the possibility of post-national and post-ethnic visions of human experience of the environment […] [and] intensified focus on the concept of 'animality'" (p. 7). He also foregrounds the way that "this new phase of the discipline has exhibited 'critiques from within' that never occurred

during first- and second-wave ecocriticism" (p. 7). This emphasizes how the field has widened since the turn of the millennium, takes into account how ecocritical research has taken up questions of, for example, postcolonialism and gender studies, and scrutinizes "the lack of a precise methodological definition of ecocriticism" (p. 7). I position my work mainly in this third wave, not only because econarratology, which I draw on, is influenced by postcolonial thinking, but also because my thematic focus on environmental citizenship examines questions of the nation and national identity.

Ecocritical research on children's literature has grown during recent decades, although the field still largely focuses on novels for adult readers. The first book-length work on children's literature from an ecocritical perspective was *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism*, edited by Kenneth B. Kidd and Sidney I. Dobrin, published in 2004. In their introduction, the authors argue that "childhood experiences in, of, and with the natural world are often deeply formative" (Dobrin & Kidd, 2004, p. 5). They furthermore write that "our society's understanding of the relationship between children and nature is, at the most general level, twofold" (p. 5) and conclude that "[w]e believe both that children are naturally close to nature and that nature education, even intervention, is in order" (p. 7). On the one hand, children are believed to be innocent and closer to nature than adults, a viewpoint that refers to the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. On the other hand, referring to John Locke, children are also "assumed to be devoid of content" (Dobrin & Kidd, 2004, p. 6), which is used as an argument for the necessity of teaching children about the natural world. Both points can also serve as reminders of the fact that when it comes to education, there is always a question of ideology involved. The same is true for children's literature. Narratives for young readers are (in most cases) created by adult authors. This means that in children's literature, adult views on childhood are prevalent. This also relates to the question of what values children are supposed to be taught (Massey & Bradford, 2011, p. 110), which is also an important factor when it comes to environmental children's literature.

With children's literature still being a minor part of ecocritical research, it is interesting that in the Scandinavian context, there is a comparably strong focus on the topic. Several publications, in the form of both books and articles, have started to discuss the role of children's literature from an ecocritical perspective. For example, Goga, Guanio-Uluru, Hallås, and Nyrnes (2018) discuss a range of Nordic texts for children in light of ecocritical perspectives in an edited volume

entitled *Ecocritical Perspectives on Children's Texts and Cultures*. Another example is the volume *På tværs af Norden. Økokritiske strømninger i nordisk børne- og ungdomslitteratur*, edited by Goga, Eskebæk Larsen, and Eriksdatter (2021). Apart from book projects, several articles that discuss ecocritical approaches to Nordic children's literature have been published in recent years. In an article entitled "Girl and Horse as Companion Species: Horse fiction in an ecocritical perspective", for example, Aslaug Nyrnes (2019) discusses the relationship between girls, horses, and nature as depicted in pony fiction. An example for an ecocritical discussion of children's poetry is an article by Per Esben Myren-Svelstad (2020) entitled "Thing that Are Too Large and Things that Are Too Small: Ecological Thinking in Ruth Lillegraven's *Eg er Eg er Eg er*". With the coming of the new national curriculum in Norway in 2020, which includes sustainable development as an interdisciplinary topic in the subject of Norwegian, interest in an ecocritical approach to Nordic children's literature that takes into account didactic perspectives has also increased further.

When it comes to the more specific question of how children's literature relates to environmental citizenship, only a few works have been published that examine this relationship. Massey and Bradford (2011) discuss the topic in an article entitled "Children as Ecocitizens: Ecocriticism and Environmental Texts". They highlight that "a range of environmental positions" (p. 124) can be found across children's literature, as well as within individual works. However, the authors remain vague about a more concrete definition of "ecocitizens". This is indeed a symptom of most research that considers the subject of environmental citizenship in literature. Most publications seem to presume an underlying understanding of what is meant by the term "ecocitizen", without going more into detail about specific aspects of the concept. In a Nordic context, recent articles (e.g., Hennig, 2021b) have discussed the topic more specifically, going into what different takes on the concept of environmental citizenship entail and highlighting how more specific ideas of environmental citizenship inform narratives for young readers.

At this point, is important to mention that while my research focus lies on children's and young adult literature, my theoretical approach is mostly informed by ecocritical – more specifically, econarratological – research and theories about environmental citizenship, rather than theories from research in children's literature. I do include approaches relevant to the media of picturebooks and comics because they inform my textual analyses. However, more classical theories

about children's and young adult literature do not otherwise play a central role in my project because my focus lies specifically on aspects of environmental citizenship and how they are narrated in the texts I examine.

My project situates itself in the research gap concerning understandings of environmental citizenship in children's literature, and specifically in multimodal narratives. To my knowledge, there are no noteworthy major publications on the topic in an Anglo-American or a Nordic context. My project seeks to contribute to bringing attention to multimodal narratives and how these can contribute to and enrich ecocritical research.

1.2 Environment

The focus of my study is on how concepts of environmental citizenship are narrated in Norwegian picturebooks and comics. I discuss a range of different models of environmental citizenship throughout chapter 2. However, I will discuss aspects of the concept of "the environment" as part of my introduction, since it alludes to the topics of both environmental citizenship and econarratology. Environmental historians Warde, Robin, and Sörlin (2018) locate a fundamental change in the concept of the environment in 1948, the year William Vogt published his book *Road to Survival*. Their observation also accords well with the Anthropocene Working Group's suggestion for the starting date of the Anthropocene in 1950, and it underlines that fundamental changes in how humans perceive the world took place around the middle of the 20th century.[2] What marks Vogt's book as novel is "his use of the term *environment*. In his thinking, *environment* ceased to mean context, just the local surroundings of an individual organism. Rather, in his mind, the environment became a global object" (Warde et al., 2018, p. 11, emphases in the original). This shift in understanding the word "environment" also points to earlier understandings of it.

The term has its etymological roots in the French word *environ*, which means 'surrounding'. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), the first usage of the term dates back to 1603 ("Environment", 2011), but at that point in time, "the sense of the term [was] the action or state of being environed or

[2] Furthermore, Warde et al. (2018) also mention George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984*, which was written in 1948, as relevant to their pinpointing of the start of a shift in the concept of the environment in that specific year. This stresses the significance of literary narratives and their involvement in social developments.

surrounded, encircled or even beleaguered" (Jessop, 2012, p. 710). The *OED* marks this usage of the term as obsolete today. In the English language, the term "environment" in the sense of "the area surrounding a place or thing […] or physical context" ("Environment", 2011) was coined with Thomas Carlyle's translation of the German *Umgebung* in a work by Goethe in 1828 (Jessop, 2012, pp. 710–711). Jessop writes that "Carlyle's coinage of 'environment' brings together topics from the Enlightenment concerning humanity's relation with nature and landscape, transnational cultural exchange, authority, language, an interdisciplinary approach to critical discourse, and two theoretically foundational competing metaphors of organicism and mechanism" (Jessop, 2012, p. 716). In other words, the term became much more complex, grew in scope, and became more abstract. One of the most central aspects that Warde et al. (2018) emphasize by relating their study to how the term changed in the middle of the 20th century is that it now also obtained a global dimension that gained a lot of additional traction after 1968, when the famous *Blue Marble* photograph made the planet as a fragile and complex entity comprehensible for the first time (p. 2). That means that our understanding of what "the environment" is, what it contains, and how different social, technological, and natural aspects of it intersect in this concept, has changed dramatically over the past roughly 70 years. And in this sense, this new understanding of the environment can also be related back to the Great Acceleration and the Anthropocene, scholarship on which has started to scrutinize human impact on those different areas that come together in our modern understanding of the environment.

In my project, the environment is one of the concepts that form a constant reference for both my theoretical foundation and my analyses. As is clear from the term's history, the environment is at the same time a local and a global phenomenon, and it is a relational term. Its etymological root of surrounding someone or something is still inscribed in the word, something that becomes clear whenever we talk about a particular environment. Alston (2016) emphasizes the various dimensions of the environment when she writes that "[i]n its broadest sense, the term 'environment' connotes contested terrains located at the intersection of economic, political, social, cultural, and sexual ecologies" (p. 93). This underlines how the concept of the environment transcends the relationship between humans and their natural surroundings and to a large degree concerns other areas as well. While environmental citizenship does have a focus on how humans shape their lives in a community when it comes to their relationship with

the nonhuman world, the models also discuss social, political, cultural, and sexual justice issues because those areas are linked to each other. In this thesis, I mostly refer to the environment as a broadly defined concept that positions humans in their physical contexts vis-à-vis the human and nonhuman worlds. While the emphasis lies for the most part on the nonhuman world, I will pay attention to (human) political and social issues throughout my analyses as well. In section 3.1, I discuss how the environment relates to literary studies through the field of ecocriticism and the environmental humanities. There, I will go into more detail about how conceptions of the environment have shaped literary studies since the 1990s.

1.3 Structure of the text

In the first part of this thesis, I discuss the theoretical and methodological foundations for my literary analyses. In chapter 2, I introduce the concept of citizenship and highlight its fundamental historical developments, as well as its most central characteristics, before discussing different approaches to environmental citizenship. The models I present in that chapter originate mostly from the political sciences. Therefore, the discussion of them will not be connected to literary studies as closely as the rest of my project is. Chapter 3, entitled "Theoretical perspectives on narratives", starts by discussing central narrative characteristics of the media under examination: picturebooks and comics. This is intended to emphasize both media's individual specificities, since there are core similarities, as well as fundamental differences, between the two. It is fruitful to contemplate picturebooks and comics individually as a first step, before discussing both media together in the remainder of chapter 3. In section 3.2, I discuss some more general approaches to the relationship between text and reader, which is important for my work, given that I examine how multimodal texts communicate with their readers with regard to aspects of environmental citizenship. Section 3.3 discusses cognitive and multimodal narratology and the concept of the 'storyworld' as the foundation for econarratology, which is my main approach to the literary analyses. Most of my discussion of narratology is based on David Herman's and Marie-Laure Ryan's works. Both have worked with cognitive as well as with multimodal narratology, and the "storyworld" is a concept coined by Herman (2002). Econarratology itself is also based to a large degree on Herman's and Ryan's works on narratology.

The theoretical part closes with a discussion of education for sustainable development as an important perspective on literature for young readers. Here, I will take up education for sustainable development as an important context for my project and discuss more general aspects of the topic, as well as highlight "sustainable development" in relation to the new national curriculum in Norwegian schools, since my work examines Norwegian literature. Even though I do not include a more practical perspective on didactics in my project, education for sustainable development is still relevant to my work on a more theoretical level. A topic like environmental citizenship especially is situated in an area filled with educational and ideological premises that are important to bear in mind. While my analyses do not consider a practical handling of these topics in a classroom setting, I discuss textual structures that are connected to the sometimes very dominant didactic aims of narratives for young readers, which can also be enriching for more practically oriented perspectives. The first part of my project is completed by chapter 4 about my methodology. Here, I first present the selection of the texts, which forms the basis of my literary analyses. After this, I introduce the analysis model I derived from my theoretical discussion in chapters 2 and 3. This model gives me a three-part structure for my literary analyses.

The second part of my project consists of econarratological analyses of seven Norwegian picturebooks and comics from the period between 1974 and 2019. The seven texts are analyzed in chronological order, which gives me the opportunity to include some reflections about their historical differences and developments in how the picturebooks and comics narrate, and how they present aspects of environmental citizenship. All of the texts I have selected come from the area of popular literature, which is a field that has not received a great deal of consideration in ecocritical research to date. The analytical part of my project closes with a comparative discussion of my analyses, where I look at overarching dynamics in the different works, as well as go into more detail regarding the differences between the seven narratives. Lastly, an appendix with exemplary pictures from the seven texts I analyze can be found at the very end of the thesis.

Part I – Theories and Methods

2 Citizenship

In order to lay the groundwork for the discussion of how literary works take up ideas of environmental citizenship, it is important to first discuss what the concept of citizenship itself means today. This chapter provides a presentation of important historical and conceptual aspects of citizenship, followed by a discussion of different approaches to environmental citizenship. Considering that theories about citizenship originate from the political sciences, this chapter is largely detached from literary studies.

Modern citizenship is most often associated with membership of a nation-state, although this has not always been the case. Citizenship has been structuring social life for about two and a half thousand years. Its beginnings are most commonly ascribed to "the writings of Aristotle and what we know of the political system in Athens and […] Sparta in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C." (Bellamy, 2008, p. 29). Early concepts of citizenship can also be found in the Roman Republic. This is also where the word citizen has its etymological roots, referring to members of the "civitas", the city-state. The corresponding Greek term is "polis". One of the central characteristics of citizenship is its relational nature. "Citizenship is a relationship between the individual and the collective, between the citizens and the political community to which they belong" (Cao, 2015, p. 24). In other words, this relationship has a horizontal (citizen-citizen) as well as a vertical (citizen-state) level. Political scientist Benito Cao (2015) distinguishes between three basic elements that are part of "conventional definitions of modern citizenship: membership, rights and duties" (p. 25). Richard Bellamy (2008) identifies the same main components in his introduction to the topic: "membership of a democratic political community, the collective benefits and rights associated with membership, and participation in the community's political, economic, and social processes" (p. 12). Some concepts of citizenship emphasize some of these dimensions more than others, but all three of them are linked and work together in what we call citizenship. Since we often assume a close connection between citizenship and democracy, it is important to note that, historically speaking, citizenship was not necessarily tied to democracy as we understand it today and an automatic connection should therefore not be assumed (Cao, 2015, p. 30). The definition and practice of both citizenship and democracy have changed over the years and, today, they include more rights for more people than they did at the time

of their formation. The following historical and conceptual outline can of course not provide a full account of how the concept of citizenship developed and changed over time, but it will help to contextualize different models of environmental citizenship that I will refer to in this thesis.

2.1 From Ancient Greek to contemporary conceptions of citizenship

The roots of citizenship lie in the city-states of Ancient Greece and the Roman Republic, with Aristotle's *The Politics* as one of the most important writings in this context. He defined the human as a 'zoon politikon', a 'political animal' whose "nature [is] to live in political communities" (Bellamy, 2008, p. 31). Those political communities were the 'poleis', the city-states. However, few people qualified for full membership of these city-states, and women, slaves, children, and everybody who was not by descent Athenian – in short, the larger part of the population – was denied the status of 'citizen' (Bellamy, 2008, p. 31). The Greek model of citizenship generally builds on the idea of the people ruling the people, which is also the very definition of 'democracy' (Bellamy, 2008, p. 34). The political system in Greek city-states required highly active citizens who devoted their lives to the offices connected to civic duties, such as jury service or participating in the Assembly (Bellamy, 2008, p. 32). In this respect, as Bellamy writes, the concept of citizenship depended heavily on non-citizens, especially women and slaves, attending to the maintenance of all the private aspects of life, so as to enable citizens to participate in their duties to the necessary extent. The extent of the activity citizens were expected to engage in also meant that private life was sharply separated from public life (Cao, 2015, p. 39). Notwithstanding the highly exclusive nature of citizenship itself, there was a general equality among these citizens. There is a substantial difference between this Greek model and the concept of citizenship in the Roman Republic, where ordinary citizens generally had less power than those in Greece, since most power was to be found in the Senate, which "gave politics and citizenship a much more instrumental character than the Greek ideal of disinterested service to the public good" (Bellamy, 2008, p. 36). A powerful tool of restricting the instrumentalization and self-interest in politics in the Roman Republic was therefore the implementation of a division of powers, which Niccolò Machiavelli later deemed "the true lesson of the Roman experience" (Bellamy, 2008, p. 38).

A fundamental change in citizenship came about as the Roman Empire was established and citizenship became a legal status applicable to a greater number of people who fell under Roman rulership. On the one hand, this conception of citizenship emphasized the protection of individual rights. On the other hand, citizenship became a more abstract status that distinguished between "the 'public' political citizen, who acts as a collective agent – the 'people' or the 'nation' – and the private, 'legal' citizen, who is the subject of the law and the possessor of 'natural' rights to liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness" (Bellamy, 2008, p. 43) – a separation that is also prevalent in modern concepts of citizenship. Since the Age of Enlightenment, modern constitutions have also sought to locate the power to be ruled in the people themselves, with the 'social contract' as a central document in this context. This has been a fundamental step toward the establishing of more equal and democratic societies since the 18th century. During the formative period for nation-states, two general models of citizenship crystallized: liberal and republican. Broadly speaking, the liberal model is associated with the Roman Empire and a stronger emphasis on the rights of citizens, while republican citizenship is associated with the Greek and Roman Republican ideals and foregrounds the duties of citizens. These two models tend to be handled separately, although they have historically been intertwined with each other to some degree (Bellamy, 2008, p. 43). However, for the sake of clarifying some of the fundamental differences between the two models as we understand them today, I will discuss them separately in the following.

As mentioned, citizens in Greek city-states were required to be highly active, and participation in political processes was of central importance. After the fall of the Roman Republic, republican notions of citizenship were neglected until the Renaissance, when the city-states of Venice and Florence brought about a revival of the model (Cao, 2015, p. 40). Republican models of citizenship emphasize the collective over the individual, and posit that "individual freedom, security and happiness derive from belonging to a political community" (Cao, 2015, p. 41). This explains the strong sense of patriotism commonly found among republican conceptions of citizenship. Citizens are expected to work for the common good and to hold it higher than their own private interests, and duties such as military service play a more prominent role in the republican model of citizenship than the rights that citizens have (Cao, 2015, pp. 41–44).

The liberal model of citizenship has become more dominant during recent centuries, and in its modern form, liberal citizenship has strongly been influenced

by the writings of John Locke and his idea of natural rights and property rights. This influence also reveals the close connection between liberal citizenship and capitalism, which was later taken up again in neoliberal conceptions of citizenship (Cao, 2015, pp. 45–46). In liberal citizenship, the individual precedes the collective, which also means that individuals are not brought together by a strong sense of community, but by the law they must equally obey (Cao, 2015, pp. 45–48). Emphasizing the individual also entails an emphasis on private interests over the common good, and the state is expected to have as little influence as possible on citizens' private lives. In liberal understandings, citizenship is seen more as a legal than a political status, and citizens are not obliged to participate in any political activities. Furthermore, liberal citizenship implies that the state should remain neutral when it comes to opinions on what a good life entails (Cao, 2015, pp. 47–49), as opposed to republican citizenship, where citizens are usually expected to work for a shared idea of what is considered as 'the good life'.

The development of and gradually increasing separation between the two classical models of citizenship and the development of nation-states were simultaneous processes. Anderson (1999) names capitalism as one of the central driving factors in popularizing the new concept of 'the nation', not least because capitalism helped foster the publishing of more books, which again helped to establish the nation as the imagined community people felt they belonged to (pp. 37–39). On a similar note, Cao (2015) writes that "[t]he transition from medieval to modern citizenship was a process driven largely by the growth of capitalism and the revolutionary changes that took Europe out of the Middle Ages and into the Modern Era" (p. 31), with the French Revolution as one of the most notable events in this context. One fundamental change in citizenship was that the nation-state became the power to which the citizen now owed loyalty, instead of the city or the king, as previously (Cao, 2015, p. 31). One of the most central references concerning the modern development of citizenship is T. H. Marshall's essay "Citizenship and Social Class" from 1950, in which the author identifies three sets of rights that people gained between the 17th and the middle of the 20th century: firstly, civil rights, which were "the rights necessary for individual freedom" (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992, p. 8); secondly, political rights, meaning "the right to participate in the exercise of political power" (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992, p. 8) for example through the right to vote, which only started to include women and other marginalized groups after a long time had elapsed; and thirdly, social rights, including the right to education, as well as to social insurance and economic

welfare. The acquisition of those rights shows how fundamentally the conception of what citizenship means has changed during the past roughly three centuries.

The 20th century saw a new sweeping change in citizenship with the rise of neoliberalism, which entailed fundamental changes to how life was organized. Not only does neoliberalism "appl[y] market values and market rules to other aspects of life" (Cao, 2015, p. 63), but the market becomes "the locus of wealth production and distribution" (p. 63). These changes call into question the three most fundamental aspects of citizenship identified at the beginning of this chapter: membership, rights, and duties (p. 63). For one thing, corporations gained legal personhood and were thus included in the concept of citizenship (p. 64), giving them more influence on the relationship between citizens and the state. In addition to commercial rights, corporations in the USA also gained, for example, "the right to participate in political campaigns" (p. 66), which gave them an impact on public life they did not have before. All this also changed the concept of the 'citizen'. With neoliberal structures emerging, "the focus [was shifted] from the individual as a political being (*zoon politikon*) towards the individual as an economic being (*zoon economicus*)" (p. 64, emphases in the original). This new focus marginalized the political and favored the economic dimension of civic life. Cao defines these two dimensions as corporate citizenship and consumer citizenship (p. 63). Neoliberalism entails consumer rights as a new set of rights for (consumer) citizens and emphasizes most strongly civil rights such as the right to own property, while neglecting, for example, social rights (Cao, 2015, pp. 64–65). The formerly existing social *right* to work has furthermore become a social *duty* (p. 66). In neoliberal systems, much participation in public life has come to mean that citizens participate in the economy. Cao (2015) observes that

> [t]he neoliberal citizen, unlike the liberal citizen, is expected to be an active and dutiful citizen. But unlike the republican citizen, the neoliberal citizen is not expected to be an active political agent (whose duty is to promote the public good, to improve the community) but an economic agent (whose principal duty is to work, so as not to burden the community). (p. 66)

This illustrates how the profound changes that neoliberalism brought about in the concept of citizenship redefine some of its basic structures and dynamics.

More recent developments of citizenship include cosmopolitan concepts that detach citizenship from the nation-state and give the concept transnational

dimensions, which is closely connected to the process of globalization. However, the general idea of cosmopolitanism is not new, but originates from Ancient Greece (the term 'cosmopolitan' comes from the Greek 'kosmopolitēs', which means 'citizen of the world'), and can also be found in Roman thought (Cao, 2015, p. 59). Modern ideas of cosmopolitanism draw on Kantian thought, which "maintains that individuals have ethical obligations to the rest of the human race which can overrule their obligations to fellow citizens" (Linklater, 1998, p. 26). Models of cosmopolitanism today are no longer "largely confined to the world of ideas" (Cao, 2015, p. 60), but the United Nations offers an example of cosmopolitan ideas and structures in action. One important aspect of this conception of citizenship is that it "transforms citizen rights into human rights" (Cao, 2015, p. 61), which is a fundamental change in that it removes the necessity of being a member of a certain community in order to be eligible for certain sets of rights, and grants those most basic rights to every human being without exception. Cosmopolitan ideas of citizenship mostly foreground the dimension of rights over that of duties, showing the "strong philosophical connection between liberalism and cosmopolitanism" (Cao, 2015, p. 61). However, there are also approaches to cosmopolitanism that articulate more republican ideas of citizenship on an international level. Examples of these ideas in action are international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are concerned about human rights or environmental issues (pp. 61–62).

In this overview, I have outlined the most significant differences between liberal, republican, and cosmopolitan understandings of citizenship, and highlighted their historical development. I showed how citizenship as a concept has changed over time, and how emphasizing different aspects of citizenship has led to different understandings of what citizenship means today. This will be helpful in the following sections, in which I will discuss different approaches to the concept of environmental citizenship, because it facilitates the contextualization of different approaches to environmental citizenship by making illuminating their fundamental understandings of citizenship itself.

2.2 Environmental citizenship

Throughout the last few decades, new concepts of citizenship that engage with environmental issues have been discussed, challenged, and developed further, leading to the coinage of the term "environmental citizenship" in the 1990s (Cao,

2015, p. 72). Because environmental topics had been becoming more and more important in political debate since the 1960s, it also became necessary to develop concepts of citizenship further. Today, there are different approaches to thinking about how citizenship and environmental topics can be brought together. However, before discussing different concepts of environmental citizenship in this section, I want to address a question regarding terminology.

Different approaches use different terms to refer to models of citizenship and the relationship of citizenship to environmental questions, e.g., 'ecological citizenship', 'environmental citizenship', 'ecocitizenship', or 'sustainability citizenship'. While there are good arguments for all the various terms, I will use 'environmental citizenship' as an umbrella term in this thesis. An argument that has been brought forth *against* using the term 'environmental' in the context of citizenship has been its anthropocentric implications (Massey & Bradford, 2011, pp. 109-110), since the very word 'environment' positions humans in the center of the world with all other beings existing around them. While I acknowledge this objection, I argue that the concept of citizenship itself is a human-made concept that was first designed to regulate relationships among people and between them and the state. Strictly speaking, citizenship always regulated the relationship between humans and their surroundings, although those surroundings originally meant other people and government bodies, rather than flora and fauna. Talking about the environment from a perspective that positions humans as part of the ecosystem and not in a however elevated position does not necessarily devalue anything that is not human. With citizenship – a socially constructed concept – being a specific term to discuss how people position themselves in relation to other beings, a certain amount of anthropocentrism is inherent in the concept of environmental citizenship, whichever term one uses. I hold the view that it is important to be aware of the anthropocentrism that lies in the concept, and to consciously reflect on it. This allows for a differentiated handling of the term and the concept, which is needed when discussing citizenship and environmental questions. I do favor 'environmental' over 'ecological' or 'eco-' because the term is more widely applicable to the world, defining the environment very generally and not only the *interaction* among beings and between them and the environment, as the term 'ecological' does.[3] 'Environment', being the more expansive term, thus

[3] The *Dictionary of Ecology* defines 'ecology' as "The scientific study of the interrelationships among organisms and between organisms, and between them and the environment" ("Ecology", 2015). The term

also encompasses what is commonly understood under the more specific term 'ecology', while the reverse is not true. Moreover, as mentioned in the introduction, my understanding of the term 'environment' does go beyond the natural environment and includes, for example, political and social issues. Depending on the specific theories discussed at various points throughout my work, I will come back to the question of terminology where it is necessary. But my general umbrella term will be 'environmental citizenship', not least because it also appears to me as more neutral than other terms, which might be understood to be more strongly connected to certain theories.

Even though the approaches to environmental citizenship I will discuss in this chapter differ quite markedly from one another, there is an underlying common feature in all of them because they all think together aspects of citizenship and environmental questions. While these approaches include a range of different perspectives on both citizenship itself and on the environment, they all argue that we, as humans, need to change something about the way we relate to the world we inhabit in order to be able to handle the environmental challenges we face. Some concepts I will discuss take their point of departure from more 'classical' understandings of citizenship (liberal, republican, cosmopolitan), while others challenge the very concept of citizenship more directly.

The following overview of different takes on environmental citizenship is organized with Benito Cao's *Environment and Citizenship* in mind, since it gives a thorough introduction to the field of environmental citizenship. The concepts that I present will be discussed in an order ranging from concepts closer to the 'classical' liberal and civic republican concepts of citizenship to the more radical approaches that challenge our understanding of citizenship in relation to nonhuman beings and question who should be counted as members of a civic community. This is intended to facilitate an understanding of the gradual shifts taking place in the various approaches to citizenship. My overview does not claim to be an exhaustive introduction to the realm of environmental citizenship in political theory, as this would go far beyond the scope of my work, which is confined to literary studies. Rather, it is intended as an introduction to the main directions in the field and to present how different concepts of citizenship discuss

'environment' is defined as "The complete range of external conditions, physical and biological, in which an organism lives. Environment includes social, cultural, and (for humans) economic and political considerations, as well as the more usually understood features such as soil, climate, and food supply" ("Environment", 2015).

environmental issues on a theoretical basis. In addition, the concepts I include in the following sections are directions in environmental citizenship that are specifically relevant to the literary analyses in the second part of my work. Therefore, some concepts of environmental citizenship are discussed in more detail, while others are excluded from my work, such as ecofeminist and multicultural approaches.

2.2.1 Liberal environmental citizenship

Liberal theories of environmental citizenship require arguably the fewest changes to our common conception of contemporary citizenship. Considering that liberal models of citizenship have generally become more dominant during the last few centuries, this is not surprising. Therefore, liberal approaches to environmental citizenship are a logical starting point for discussing approaches to environmental citizenship.

Derek Bell's "influential" (Cao, 2015, p. 74) discussion on the subject of 'liberal environmental citizenship' starts by stressing the importance of considering that citizens are, in the sense of political liberalism, "citizens of an environment" (Bell, 2005, p. 180), but the notion of the environment has often been neglected in liberal theories about citizenship. He argues that the most fundamental shift that needs to take place in order to include environmental issues in liberal models of citizenship is to not conceive of nature as property, as has long been the case, but to "adopt conceptions of the environment as 'provider of basic (human) needs' and as 'a subject about which there is reasonable disagreement'" (p. 180). He describes the ongoing detachment of the body from the environment and argues that this detachment is "not only environmentally dangerous but also internally inconsistent with […] the right to have our basic needs met and the 'fact of reasonable pluralism'" (p. 183) that is central to political liberalism.

According to Bell, conceiving of the environment as the 'provider of basic needs' does not stand against reasonable pluralism, simply because human survival depends on the environment. However, Bell also argues that "[p]olitical liberalism is not committed to, and therefore must abstain from, any more substantive conception of the environment" (p. 185). This means that any further debate about the environment and its value, or the design of laws to protect the environment, should be subject to democratic procedures and debates. Taking a right to clean air as an example, Bell writes that any specifications about what this right should look

like is "likely to be subject to reasonable disagreement" (p. 186), given the different conceptions people can have of what 'clean air' is. Here, the democratic process ought to be decisive, since the state should not dictate a certain conception of, for example, which requirements must be met to be able to speak of 'clean air'.

Bell argues for 'procedural environmental rights' that enable citizens to claim and defend their rights and participate in political processes, and would include the entitlement "to information on the environmental quality" (Barry, 2006, p. 187) and the possibility of campaigning for other environmental rights. Bell also stresses the personal rights liberal environmental citizens have, which include consumption choices or the choice to be a member of an environmental organization.

As is typical of liberal conceptions of citizenship, the main duty of a liberal environmental citizen would be to comply with the law, which includes environmental laws. Bell does, however, argue for the establishment of 'environmental duties' instead of environmental laws in some cases. He links this to laws that might heavily impact the private sphere, which in liberal theories is highly undesirable. His argument for 'environmental duties' is grounded in morality when he writes that

> [t]he idea of explicitly non-enforceable political duties recognises the capacity of citizens to act justly even when there is no threat of punishment for unjust actions. Indeed, duty making instead of law making might even encourage citizens to recognise their responsibility for their own behaviour. (p. 191)

This strikes me as a somewhat utopian thought, especially given that Bell is careful not to enforce too much personal involvement on 'liberal environmental citizens', but suggests at the same time that they will voluntarily choose this path anyway. As a significant concluding point, Bell stresses the importance of transforming new theories about forms of environmental citizenship into action, and not remaining in the realm of theory.

Philosopher Simon Hailwood (2005) connects his approach to the conception of environmental citizenship to 'reasonable citizenship'. He combines the notion of 'reasonable pluralism' that is also prevalent in Bell's model with a 'respect for nature's otherness' that, according to Hailwood, leads to a non-instrumental view of nature (p. 198). While this might seem to go a step further

than Bell, who argues for seeing nature not as property but as the provider of basic needs (although nothing more than that), Hailwood also makes clear that respecting nature and its otherness "is here being understood largely in terms of *not identifying* it with human purposes, interests and plans, hence nature *as other*" (Hailwood, 2005, p. 198, emphases in the original). In essence, Hailwood makes clear that a non-instrumental view of nature does not necessarily attribute any intrinsic value to it, but merely argues for accepting and respecting that nature and humans are not the same thing – a claim that might potentially reinforce a nature-culture dichotomy that many researchers view as contributing to the current environmental crisis.

Hailwood sees the concept of citizenship as not applicable to the nonhuman world because, he argues, it is not "in and of itself [a] moral community, much less [a] political community" (Hailwood, 2005, p. 201). He does, however, write that "direct citizenly obligations to nature are not blocked by the thought that citizens can have direct obligations only to fellow citizens" (Hailwood, 2005, p. 203). This thought strikes me as just as utopian as Bell's idea that encouraging environmental duties instead of implementing environmental laws will lead to people choosing a more environmentally friendly lifestyle solely for moral reasons. The questionable point here is whether this will apply to a majority of the population.

Hailwood emphasizes the importance of education in an environmental context to be able to understand both the local and global scale of these kinds of issues, but his model is even less precise than Bell's when it comes to concrete thoughts on the duties of citizenship. Apart from acknowledging the possibility that one could have obligations toward other beings than just our fellow human citizens, he does not go into detail as to what kinds of obligations could be a part of his conception of environmental citizenship. Rather, Hailwood argues that "environmentally reasonable citizens also acknowledge their material, causal responsibility for the extent to which their cultural landscape is destructive of the independent natural world" (Hailwood, 2005, p. 205). While this is in fact a reasonable goal, it leaves the question of the behavioral consequences that result from becoming an environmentally reasonable citizen out of the discussion.

Generally speaking, liberal approaches to environmental citizenship are often criticized for being "entirely insufficient to address the environmental challenges facing humanity" (Cao, 2015, p. 76). This comes largely from the tendency of these theories to emphasize citizens' rights while demanding few obligations. At the same time, liberal models of environmental citizenship,

especially that of Bell, appear to generally accord with what modern Western democracies practice today (Hennig, 2021b). This is an interesting tension, which will be important to keep in mind for the literary analyses in the second part of this thesis.

2.2.2 Sustainability citizenship and ecological republicanism

In his article about 'sustainability citizenship', John Barry (2006) argues for an approach to environmental issues that is based on a republican understanding of citizenship. He dismisses the term 'environmental citizenship' on the grounds that it "confines acts of citizenship to environmental actions or behavior that have beneficial environmental effects" (pp. 23–24), instead of focusing "on the underlying structural causes of environmental degradation" (p. 24), to do which would demand a "more ambitious multifaceted, and challenging mode of green citizenship" (p. 24) that Barry calls 'sustainability citizenship'. Barry's main point is that it is essential to go beyond individual actions and address environmental issues on a structural level. He acknowledges that a duties-based conception of citizenship, as he proposes it, can be felt as burdensome or as promoting one specific view of 'the good life' while excluding others because it does not promote political pluralism in the same way liberalism does. He sees some parallels between modern interpretations of republican citizenship and green political activism, which he takes as inspiration for his model. Barry stresses that "citizenship is something that has to be learned" (p. 27) and argues that this makes sustainability citizenship vulnerable, given "the ever-present temptation for citizens to forget their duty or lapse into self-regarding interests and pursuits at the expense of fulfilling their individual contribution to collective action and vigilance for the common good" (p. 27).

One of Barry's main approaches to 'sustainability citizenship' lies in examining possibilities of compulsory service. He sees the potential problematic elements of service enforced by the state, but argues that a lot of what would be made compulsory "already goes on voluntarily" (p. 30). In order to not have the socially disadvantaged members of society execute the biggest part of this kind of service, Barry sees equality as an important requirement. One suggestion he makes for accounting for the inequality in society would be for those who own a sports utility vehicle (SUV) to pay higher sustainability taxes or do more compulsory

service – or, in turn, taxes could be lowered for those who have done more compulsory service.

Going a step further, Barry argues that 'sustainability citizenship' brings with it a form of resistance against unsustainable structures, meaning it can act as a "corrective to unsustainable development" (p. 32), which leads him to talking about 'critical sustainability citizenship' later on. He sees the importance in citizens' critical behavior and nonviolent actions of resistance, since "states, economies, and cultures show little sign of independently becoming more sustainable without citizen action" (p. 34). Here also lies the main challenge Barry sees concerning his approach. In most societies, citizens are more passive than active, and the main citizenship activity in many states is that of voting, which is but one aspect of what constitutes the realm of citizenship in a republican view. Furthermore, citizenship mainly takes place in the private sphere instead of the public sphere (p. 36), which is another aspect that conflicts with Barry's ideas of 'sustainability citizenship', as well as with republican citizenship's general focus on the public sphere. However, Barry sees the need for cultivating and publicly articulating a critical attitude toward unsustainable structures, which is why he concludes by formulating his opinion in a slightly exaggerated form by stating "we need civil disobedience before obedience, and more than ever, we need critical citizens and not just law-abiding ones" (p. 40).

In his model of 'ecological republicanism', Patrick Curry (2000) starts by addressing the question of what a community is and how it can be defined. Considering definitions from both the social sciences and ecology, he tries to bring those two usually separate conceptions of a community together. He suggests some basic requirements for defining a human community, which are "(1) a social connection such that members impact upon each other in ways that affect their material or embodied behavior; […] (2) an experiential connection to the others involved: an awareness of other members of the community" (Curry, 2000, p. 1060) and, drawing on Machiavelli's concept of the common good and *virtú*, also states that "(3) communities are only maintained by certain practices, in default or corruption of which they disintegrate" (p. 1062). Turning to an ecological definition of community, Curry sees that non-sentient and/or abiotic nature is often excluded from communities in the ecological context in order to be able to study a certain organism with the necessary scrutiny. However, Curry concludes that although the environment is often excluded from ecological investigations for understandable reasons, not only do ecological communities consist of open

organisms that interact with each other, but he also sees the "importance [of nature – B. H.] – not merely as a passive background of 'environment' but as what ultimately constitutes as well as enables organisms" (p. 1064). This leads Curry to state that the requirement of an awareness of being a part of a community brings into question how we define 'awareness'. He critiques the "chronic tendency (not unrelated to our species chauvinism) to underestimate the degree of sentience among non-human animals" (p. 1065) and dismisses both human second-order awareness – "that is, an awareness of being aware" (p. 1065) – and linguistic ability as reasons to exclude nonhuman beings from being members of the same community as humans.

Turning to what he calls 'ecological republicanism', Curry points to the way that "human beings, as is the case in so much of their development, must *learn* to act as good citizens, while non-human animals already try to act so (within their species limitations) in less conscious ways" (p. 1067). This draws mainly on the idea that nonhuman animals instinctively behave in a way that contributes to the group's flourishing and survival, which falls into what he defines as the behavior of a good citizen. Consequently, Curry sees the human community as "a special phenomenon […] within the ambit of the ecological" (p. 1068), and ultimately argues for a more integrative understanding of the community humans are a part of. In the sense of defining the members of a community, Curry's approach is much more radical than the models discussed so far. However, his thoughts on the question of what a practical design for this type of community could look like or how life in this kind of community could be organized on a structural level remain unanswered, while concrete thoughts about what the rights and duties of citizens in an 'ecological republicanism' would involve are also lacking.

The republican models discussed here differ from liberal models in their approach to structural questions. They emphasize the dimension of duties more strongly than that of rights and have the potential to challenge the definition of who is part of the community – and how citizens could or should be involved in making communities less unsustainable.

2.2.3 From environmental to ecological citizenship

The best-known approach to the topic of the relationship between citizenship and the environment was formulated by British political scientist Andrew Dobson. In his book *Citizenship and the Environment* from 2003, he argues for a post-

cosmopolitan approach to citizenship and makes a case for an 'ecological citizenship' that combines key features of different existing conceptions of citizenship, while at the same time departing from classical approaches in quite radical ways (Cao, 2015).

Two fundamentally important features for Dobson's model are post-cosmopolitanism and globalization. Much like cosmopolitanism, post-cosmopolitanism is not confined to territorial boundaries, but takes a transnational approach to citizenship. A central problem for Dobson is an underlying asymmetry in the distribution of power in a globalized world, which he takes as the starting point for his concept of post-cosmopolitanism (Dobson, 2003, p. 13). The notion that some countries have much more power and impact on the planet than others is imperative for post-cosmopolitanism, and Dobson uses environmental politics as an example of this deep-seated asymmetry. He argues that globalization is not to be seen as synonymous with 'interconnectedness', a term that obscures this underlying problematic. This important distinction, according to Dobson, "makes a difference, because viewing globalization as constitutively asymmetrical makes clearer the nature and direction of the political obligations it [globalization – B. H.] entails" (Dobson, 2003, p. 21). The most important civic virtue Dobson builds his model of post-cosmopolitanism on is that of justice, which leads to certain requirements and obligations connected, among other things, to "[t]he obligation to compensate for harm" (Dobson, 2003, p. 28), something that applies to environmental issues as well as to those related to globalization. The asymmetry that Dobson sees as fundamentally important does in consequence also mean that "obligations are not owed equally (by everyone to everyone), but asymmetrically (by some to others)" (Cao, 2015, p. 88). The community of citizens is thus defined by the obligations that certain citizens owe to others, and it is not bound by national borders, but spans the whole of the globe. The importance of obligations foregrounds the emphasis on duties and responsibilities prevalent in post-cosmopolitanism.

One area in which Dobson's concept differs markedly from both liberal and civic republican understandings of citizenship is the political importance he ascribes to the private sphere as a space for citizenship, an argument that is also central to feminist theories about environmental citizenship. This is connected to the other virtues he sees as fundamentally important in post-cosmopolitanism. Aside from the importance of justice, which is closely connected to obligations, Dobson also recognizes the private sphere as "a site of the exercise of power" (p.

53), thus politicizing it. He acknowledges both the political impact personal decisions can have and the fact that personal life has an influence on what Dobson defines as further virtues of citizenship: compassion and care. Secondary to justice, both of these characteristics are usually cultivated in the private sphere because they are strongly connected to our various personal relationships. Also, he points to the importance of both care and compassion when it comes to "meeting those [that is, ecological – B. H.] obligations" (p. 138) in connection to what he calls 'ecological citizenship', since they help to enable ecological justice.

Coming from post-cosmopolitanism, Dobson calls his model of 'ecological citizenship' both "an example of post-cosmopolitan citizenship and a particular interpretation of it" (p. 138). He distinguishes 'ecological' from 'environmental' citizenship and calls both models politically equally valuable, albeit that intellectually speaking, 'ecological citizenship' is the more interesting concept for him. His definition of 'environmental citizenship' entails only the public sphere and focuses solely on environmental rights. Benito Cao summarizes this concept as "'light green' politics that result in 'shallow' adjustments that can fit neatly within mainstream notions of citizenship" (Cao, 2015, p. 87). However, 'ecological citizenship' brings with it the radical implications of post-cosmopolitanism, spanning both public and private sphere, its non-territorial nature, and its emphasis on duties and responsibilities, and thus demands more severe changes in environmental politics than does 'environmental citizenship'.

Dobson constructs his whole model around the ecological footprint[4] as the key ingredient that produces the space of 'ecological citizenship'. This production accords with the ecological footprint and determines what kind of obligations are owed and to whom they are owed. One obligation that arises "is to ensure that such footprints do not compromise or foreclose others' opportunities, both in the present and in the future, for living meaningful lives" (Dobson, 2003, p. 127). The importance of justice comes into play here because these obligations are of an asymmetrical nature, meaning those who produce a larger ecological footprint owe more than those who occupy only a little ecological space. Cao helpfully refers to these categories as ecological 'debtors' and 'creditors' (Cao, 2015, p. 89). Using the ecological footprint as the defining tool also means politicizing the private

[4] In his discussion of Dobson's work, Benito Cao (2015) writes that "[t]he ecological footprint refers to the amount of ecological space that individuals, organizations and communities take up, in terms of resources used and burdens on the environment, that is, the amount of land required to sustain a particular lifestyle" (p. 88).

sphere, since it accounts for individual everyday decisions on a global scale. Thus, activities in the private sphere such as composting or choosing public transportation instead of using the car become politically relevant because they impact the size of our ecological footprint. Here, Dobson draws on feminist thought that challenges the strict separation between public and private sphere because "politics […] intersects with the private sphere and the personal" (Cao, 2015, p. 89).

Overall, Dobson's model focuses much more on horizontal (citizen-citizen) than on vertical (citizen-state) citizenship relations, given his emphasis on the importance of the obligations ecological 'debtors' owe to ecological 'creditors'. The vertical relations between citizen and state account more for what he calls 'environmental citizenship', which, as mentioned above, he sees as mostly concerned with the public sphere and the implementation of environmental rights rather than environmental duties. However, placing the responsibility largely on individual citizens has its drawbacks, given that it can shift attention away from larger unsustainable structures and entails the question of whether all citizens are able to afford to make ecological choices, which are to date often more expensive (Cao, 2015, pp. 90–91).

Dobson's work has been criticized for its implication that using the ecological footprint and determining the ecological debt of individuals – who will to a large extent be citizens of the Global North – victimizes the Global South and denies this region the agency to act politically, ultimately excluding it from the community of ecological citizens (Hayward, 2006). Who counts as part of the community is a question that several researchers have discussed in their approaches to environmental citizenship. I will discuss models that scrutinize questions of community membership more thoroughly in the following two subsections, which focus on approaches to environmental citizenship that can be understood as more radical than the concepts I have discussed so far.

2.2.4 The natural contract

In his concept of the 'natural contract', French philosopher Michel Serres foregrounds the intrinsic value of nature. The concept itself is rooted in philosophy rather than in the political sciences, but the close connection between Serres's 'natural contract' and Rousseau's 'social contract' stresses the importance of citizenship in it.

Serres argues for the establishing of a 'natural contract' along the lines of the social contract to create an equilibrium between humans and nature. To construct his concept, Serres's point of departure is war, which he sees as "the motor of history" (Serres, 2011, p. 14), but also, and most importantly, as a legal status. He sees a fundamental difference between mere violence and war in the legal sense that frames it as a specific type of conflict in which the opposing parties are officially declared and which, more importantly, can be ended and thus lead to peace. To get from violence to war, Serres argues that humanity needed the concept of the social contract, as formulated by Rousseau in 1762. This allowed for "the possibility for every man to attain the status of subject of the law" (p. 36). The emphasis lies on the term 'subject', as opposed to 'object', a pivotal point in how human relations (in the public sphere) were conceived of. Serres goes on to describe how nature needs to be part of the equation of how we structure social life because "[n]ature behaves as a subject" (p. 36) – it is an active entity consisting of many different agents. Yet the social contract left "the world on the sidelines, an enormous collection of things reduced to the status of passive objects to be appropriated" (p. 36). Relating to the world as a realm of objects that can be owned is the fundamental problem that Serres challenges in his concept. He stresses that "[t]hrough exclusively social contracts, we have abandoned the bond that connects us to the world" (p. 48) and reflects on the merit and detriment of the declaration of the rights of man speaking of "every man" but in turn excluding the nonhuman world (and, unsurprisingly, women).

Serres sees humanity's behavior toward the world as parasitic. "The parasite", he says, "would destroy the host without realizing it" (Serres, 2011, p. 36). While I argue that humans do on some level realize that we are destroying our host, our behavior still corresponds to what Serres describes as "parasitic". This kind of behavior can, according to Serres, be ended by giving those we treat as objects the legal status of subjects. This is the meaning of the 'natural contract'. He describes this concept as

> a natural contract of symbiosis and reciprocity in which our relationship to things would set aside mastery and possession in favor of admiring attention, reciprocity, contemplation, and respect; where knowledge would no longer imply property, nor action mastery, nor would property and mastery imply their excremental results and origins. (p. 38)

What the 'natural contract' implies is a radical shift in our relationship toward nature[5] that would demand a seriously ecocentric mindset, in that it poses some fundamental moral questions relating to how we treat the world and how this behavior would have to change if those we regard as objects were in fact to become legal subjects, with all that that entails. He argues that nature "speaks to us in terms of forces, bonds, and interactions, and that's enough to make a contract" (p. 39). One reason as to why humans have difficulties understanding nature is given later in the text, when Serres writes that "[n]ature lies outside the collectivity, which is why the state of nature remains incomprehensible to the language invented in and by society" (p. 85).

Serres also connects the 'natural contract' to the principle of reason as stated by Leibniz, to foreground the 'natural contract' as a logical consequence of the history of religion, the development of the natural sciences, and philosophical and juridical developments over the course of human history. All this serves to build an argument for the 'natural contract' as a necessary step. He describes how humans went from being threatened by the forces of nature to having mastery over nature, and how scientific knowledge after Galileo gained more and more traction until scientific reason attained a higher status than both religion and juridical judgement. Today, as Serres describes it, with the seeming omnipotence we have gained through science, judgement catches up due to the dangers that scientific developments have brought with them. He demands prudence when it comes to science, arguing that "[t]oday, our collectivity can equally well die of the productions of reason or safeguard itself through them" (p. 93). The principle of reason, which Serres describes as a foundation for scientific knowledge (Serres, 2011, p. 89), "consists in the establishment of a fair contract" (Serres, 2011, p. 90), which for him, of course, is the 'natural contract'.

It becomes apparent that Serres's concept is highly abstract and does not contain descriptions of what exactly an equilibrium between humans and nature would look like, or how the social and political systems we live in could be changed to achieve this equilibrium. However, the concept of the 'natural contract' introduces a radical shift in some fundamental aspects of our thinking and gives nature the much more powerful status of legal subject instead of an object.[6]

[5] Serres dismisses the term 'environment' because of its implication that humans are positioned at the center with all other beings and things "around" (environ) them (Serres, 2011, p. 33).

[6] A noteworthy example of where nature has gained certain legal rights is the adoption of the Framework Law 300 of Mother Earth and Integral Development for Living Well in Bolivia in 2012. Villavicencio

2.2.5 The politics of nature

The last approach to the concept of environmental citizenship I discuss in this chapter concerns the thought of Bruno Latour, which calls for a rethinking of basic conceptions we commonly have about the world and about how our living together in society is generally organized. In his work *Politics of Nature* from 2004, he criticizes our common understanding of political ecology for failing to consider "that the notions of nature and politics had been developed over centuries in such a way as to make any juxtaposition, any synthesis, any combination of the two terms *impossible*" (p. 3, emphasis in the original). Throughout his book, Latour sets out to deconstruct these concepts in order to create a new understanding of the concept of political ecology that dispenses with the – as Latour argues, artificial – separation between concepts such as 'nature' and 'culture', or 'science' and 'politics'. Gertenbach and Laux (2019) write that Latour pursues the goals of rendering visible the politics of nature that have been obscured by modernity, and of formulating a constitution that does justice to this kind of politics (p. 211). Some of his fundamental arguments can be found in, and are connected to, his earlier works, most notably his contribution to 'Actor Network Theory' and his book *We Have Never Been Modern*, published in 1991. In both works, he lays the groundwork for his argument against the artificial separation between nature and culture, and science and politics, which he sees as a central problem that arose in the wake of modernity.[7]

The starting point of, and a constant point of reference in, *Politics of Nature* is Plato's Allegory of the Cave, which according to Latour entails a "double rupture" (Latour, 2004, p. 11), separating science from politics and nature from culture. Latour argues that the idea that politics and science concern different areas of responsibility is essentially a false conclusion and is furthermore an artificial divide that needs constant confirmation to be maintained. This brings him to arguing that political ecology must let go of the concept of 'nature' because it must let go of the conception of a world separated into subjects and objects that is inscribed in our culture. For Latour, letting go of this separation also entails letting

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Calzadilla and Kotzé (2018) write that "[a]lthough the Framework Law does not have supreme constitutional force, it is of preferential application to related laws dealing with natural resources and extraction, which must correspond with and are subject to the provisions of the Framework Law" (p. 404).

[7] For a more detailed discussion of Latour's argument about the problematic rupture brought about by modernity, see Latour (1993). Discussing Latour's argument at length here would go beyond the scope of this work and drift too far away from the main focus of my project.

go of the notion of society, which is rooted in this separation. Instead, he proposes to establish what he calls the 'collective' as a social structure that includes both humans and nonhumans (Latour, 2004, p. 238). Connected to this is his proposal to let go of the "old Constitution", meaning the modern separation between nature and culture, objects and subjects, science and politics. Instead, he argues for the establishment of a "new Constitution" that overcomes this separation in an assembly of humans and nonhumans. In order to enable a discussion between humans and nonhumans, Latour proposes to install scientists as spokespersons for nonhumans, since they are able to translate what we hitherto have defined as 'nature' into human language. Having human spokespersons would, as Latour writes, not enable nonhuman agents to speak (because they can already speak – just in languages that are different from human ones), but human spokespersons would enable a shared debate, which would mean that "speech is no longer a human property, or at least humans are no longer its sole masters" (Latour, 2004, p. 65).

To further break down the separation between subjects and objects, Latour introduces the term 'actants' to denominate humans and nonhumans on the grounds that this term is devoid of any anthropomorphism (Latour, 2004, p. 75). As an extension of this, he also repudiates the term 'citizen', arguing that "[w]e need a new term that has no whiff of the Old Regime [that is, the "old Constitution" – B. H.] about it" (Latour, 2004, p. 83). He proposes instead the term 'proposition', which he uses "in a metaphysical sense to designate not a being of the world or a linguistic form but an association of humans and nonhumans before it becomes a full-fledged member of the collective, an instituted essence" (Latour, 2004, p. 247).

There is a central conflict between Latour's approach to redefining political ecology and Michel Serres's 'natural contract', because Latour argues that in essence, Serres's concept does not account for the artificial separation between science and politics, nature and culture, subjects and objects that Latour deems the most central problematic that needs to be overcome. He writes that "it is useless to hope that a 'natural contract' will intervene to repair the limitations of the old social contract, as if one could simply bring together in one great whole the subjects and objects constituted over the years in order to wage the most pitiless of cold wars against one another" (Latour, 2004, p. 58). Latour locates the point where we need to adjust and change some of our basic conceptions about the world much earlier in human history and therefore fundamentally disagrees with where

the ‘natural contract’ has its starting point according to Serres. On other points, however, such as the question of how nonhuman entities speak and the need for an equal status for them, there are many similarities between the two philosophers. In spite of its highly abstract nature, Latour’s concept of a political ecology under the paradigms he discusses is a politically as well as philosophically radical model because, much like Serres, Latour calls into question fundamental definitions of who counts as a member of the community. However, he does not present specific thoughts on how a society that overcomes the nature-culture dichotomy and even discards the term ‘citizen’ in favor of the concept of ‘proposition’ could be structured and function. But his idea that humans should find a way to “let the facts speak” and engage in an equal public dialogue between humans and nonhumans would change humans’ position in the political world because the political world itself would be defined in a new way.

2.3 Environmental citizenship and narrative

In the previous section, it became clear that concepts of environmental citizenship differ quite substantially from one another, even though they take the same point of departure in that they discuss environmental problems and how these relate to aspects of citizenship. Some of the concepts I discussed emphasize the rights of environmental (or, ecological, sustainable, etc.) citizens, while others instead emphasize citizens’ duties and are thus connected to liberal and republican understandings of citizenship itself. Liberal theories mostly focus on environmental rights that citizens have and tend to promote environmentally friendly practices as necessary – yet ultimately voluntary – actions that happen on an individual level and are mostly confined to the private sphere. Republican theories of environmental citizenship appear to pay more attention to larger unsustainable structures in society and suggest taxes or compulsory environmental engagement as part of their approaches to the topic. The models that are less closely connected to classical liberal or republican theories of citizenship focus less on the topic of rights and duties but cast new light on the question of citizenship itself and not only contest its territoriality, but also ask the question of who belongs to an ecological community.

While some researchers (most notably Bell and Hailwood) argue that citizenship is a concept reserved for humans, others suggest including nonhuman animals or even plants as citizens, so as to achieve more equal structures in the

world. Those more radical models include, as could be seen in the works of both Michel Serres and Bruno Latour, high levels of abstraction since they begin their models by redefining concepts fundamental to the Western European understanding of citizenship and related topics such as membership in a community, justice, rights, and duties. In addition, these two concepts did not originate in political science, but are more strongly rooted in philosophy.

Dobson's approach to 'ecological citizenship' differs from the others not least because it is the model that is elaborated in most detail, which might be one of the reasons why it is the best-known model in the field. Dobson formulates the rights and duties included in 'ecological citizenship' quite explicitly and politicizes the private sphere as an important area when it comes to aspects of citizenship. At the same time, Dobson discusses horizontal civic relationships in much more detail than vertical ones, thus potentially sidelining the importance of changing larger unsustainable structures.

I have shown that the different approaches all see the need for change in humans' relationship with nature, but locate the point where this would start at different levels. For example, while republican thinkers emphasize the role the state plays, liberal thought prioritizes citizens' rights and argues more strongly for voluntary individual lifestyle changes that are beneficial for the environment. It is important to note that I do not favor some of the models I discussed over others, and that the goal of my work is not to evaluate whether the multimodal narratives I examine promote 'right' or 'wrong' ideas about environmental citizenship. My interest lies rather in *how* different picturebooks and comics take up aspects of environmental citizenship and how literary narratives correlate with some of the themes discussed in the different models I presented. My hypothesis is that the ways in which the narratives I analyze take up aspects of environmental citizenship differ, and that it is not always one particular concept that is being presented, but that the picturebooks and comics do in fact contain a variety of aspects of and perspectives on environmental citizenship.

All the models of environmental citizenship I discussed present different conceptions of how we define our place in the world, which is also a question prevalent in literary narratives. My task is to examine how narrative structures engage with discussions and ideas about environmental citizenship. Given that literature has contributed to shaping both individual and collective identities, as Anderson (1999) argues, literary works also have an impact on how we define ourselves as humans on the planet, in the context of an environment. Therefore, I

subscribe to the premise of James and Morel (2020) "that stories about the environment significantly influence experiences of that environment, and vice versa" (p. 1). This includes the political dimension of citizenship – and consequently also that of environmental citizenship.

In an ecocritical context, only a few works have discussed more concrete models of environmental citizenship. One of the few existing examples of this direction in ecocritical research is an article by Reinhard Hennig (2021b) that discusses aspects of environmental citizenship in relation to a children's novel from 2018 by Norwegian author Arne Svingen. In the article, Hennig takes up specific theories of environmental citizenship (e.g., Andrew Dobson's model) and relates them to Svingen's novel. Another case is a monograph entitled *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative* by Alexa Weik von Mossner (2017a), in which the author explicitly refers to Andrew Dobson's model of 'ecological citizenship' concerning the connection between environmental thinking and environmental narratives, more specifically "ecotopian horizons" (p. 172). Although the discussion of Dobson's model is not a central argument that is explored at length in her work, this is an example of research that connects environmental citizenship and the study of literature in more concrete ways, considering specific approaches to environmental citizenship as a concept. However, with these few exceptions, ecocritical research has to my knowledge not considered aspects of environmental citizenship as extensively and in as much detail as my work does. Furthermore, my work is the first to examine multimodal narratives in this context. Therefore, I hope to contribute to the widening of the field of ecocriticism by discussing theories of environmental citizenship in more detail with regard to multimodal narratives.

The more general intersection between literature and citizenship is central to some arguments that Benedict Anderson (1999) makes about the development of national communities. However, other researchers have also been interested in the more specific connection between literature and citizenship in an ecocritical context. In an edited volume entitled *American Studies, Ecocriticism, and Citizenship*, Adamson and Ruffin (2012) argue that "[q]uestions of citizenship have long been at the heart of the AS [American Studies – B. H.] field imaginary and central to debates about the interrelations of cosmopolitanism, nationalism, localism, and environmentalism" (p. 2). While the work goes more into detail about questions of citizenship and how they relate to environmental issues in the context of American Studies, neither the notion of environmental citizenship nor

different understandings of the term are taken up explicitly. Rather, the edited volume focuses more strongly on postcolonial perspectives on the intersection of ecocriticism, environmentalism, and environmental justice. In an article entitled "Dimensions of Citizenship through the Lens of *The Hunger Games*: Fiction and the Visual and Performing Arts as Springboards for Citizenship Education", Lucey, Lycke, Laney, and Connelly (2013) discuss aspects of citizenship in Suzanne Collins's dystopian young adult novel *The Hunger Games* from 2008. While the authors do not go into different theories about citizenship, they explore different dimensions of citizenship that are prevalent in the novel and contextualize them in relation to citizenship education in schools. The article does not include a discussion of environmental questions, but it is a good example of how a nuanced examination of aspects of citizenship can be taken up in relation to young adult literature.

Coming back to the topic of research about environmental citizenship in literary studies, most research does not treat the subject in such a nuanced way as the examples of Hennig (2021b) and von Mossner (2017a) do, but instead assumes an underlying understanding of what is meant by terms such as 'environmental citizenship', 'ecological citizenship', or 'ecocitizenship' without going more into detail. This goes both for research about adult literature and research about children's literature. Massey and Bradford (2011) write about children's environmental texts where "[o]ne of their primary functions is to socialize young people into becoming the responsible and empathetic adults of tomorrow by positioning them as ecocitizens, dedicated both to sustainable development in the local sphere and also to global responsibility" (p. 109). However, the authors do not look deeper into what a dedication to sustainable development might entail or not entail, nor what they understand global responsibility to be. In an article entitled "Children as Eco-citizens?", Heggen et al. (2019) point to the fact that the term 'eco-citizen' does not have a standardized definition, and define the term as follows:

> Eco-citizens practice their citizenship on planet earth, participating in the ecological system of the planet, together with the more-than-human world […]. Eco-citizens have a common and individual responsibility for the planet, all its inhabitants, and future generations. Both adult-sized and child-sized eco-citizens have additional rights that provide for the protection of

> the individual against the effects of pollution and environmental degradation. (p. 391)

The authors' understanding of the term 'eco-citizen' is informed by the works of Massey and other Australian researchers on the topic. But also here, the definition of the term 'eco-citizen' strikes me as a very general understanding of an eco-citizen as an environmentally responsible person without going further into the question what environmental responsibility entails. This lack of nuance regarding the notion of environmental citizenship is common in ecocritical research about the topic and often leads to an imprecise use of the term that does not account for the variety of approaches to the concept of environmental citizenship demonstrated in the overview I provided in this chapter. The range of positions on what environmental citizenship can mean calls for a more nuanced examination of its properties, which is the central focus of my project. This becomes especially clear when one considers that terms such as eco-citizen or ecocitizen, which are closely connected to the notion of environmental citizenship, are used in literary research, but often without a more nuanced reflection about the theoretical and conceptual foundations implied in different approaches to environmental citizenship.

3 Theoretical perspectives on narratives

In this chapter, I will discuss my theoretical approaches to examining aspects of environmental citizenship in picturebooks and comics. First, I will discuss some of the main characteristics and narrative strategies of picturebooks and comics. Because both media mainly work with the same modalities – verbal text and pictures – in different ways, a short presentation of some of their narrative characteristics is a worthwhile addition to the theoretical basis of my project. Additionally, since I will be discussing picturebooks and comics together throughout the rest of this chapter, I first want to highlight some of the characteristics that are important for picturebooks and comics individually. It is important to keep in mind that even though both media are very similar to each other in many aspects, their use of verbal text and pictures also differs in ways that need consideration. Following the presentation of the media, I will discuss relationships between reader and text through the lens of reader-response theory. From there, I will discuss my analytical method, econarratology, and its theoretical foundations, which are largely based in cognitive narratology and ecocriticism, in more detail. The chapter concludes with a discussion of education for sustainable development in the context of the school subject of Norwegian and the teaching of literature.

3.1 Picturebooks and comics

Comics and picturebooks narrate employing the same semiotic modes. Most of the approaches to distinguish between comics and picturebooks start from their formal aspects, but the degree to which the difference between the two is artificial remains debatable. Joe Sutliff Sanders (2013) points to some problems with a formal approach and argues for a distinction between the two types of text that starts from the intended audiences for both. Nathalie Op de Beeck (2012) also refers to the many similarities between comics and picturebooks and writes "formally one may be said to be a subset of the other – strong philosophical and ideological reasons persist for their separation" (p. 468). For example, while picturebooks often work with a double audience consisting of both a child and an adult who engage with the picturebook together, comics are designed for single readers. This has consequences for some of the narrative strategies used in each type of text, but Sanders (2013) also points to radically different public and cultural views on comics and picturebooks that are connected to the question of their target

audiences. This notion is related to a difference in how both kinds of narratives are monitored by adults. Picturebooks usually rely on there being an experienced reader who performs the words and thus pre-interprets the picturebook narrative when reading it to a child. Comics, in contrast, rely on readers who interpret the meaning of what they read themselves and are thus much less monitored by adults. Sanders argues that this individual monitoring of picturebooks during the reading process also explains why comics have caused uproar as a *medium*, while "[o]utbreaks of hysteria about picture books […] have historically been both rare and specific" (Sanders, 2013, p. 71). The lack of supervision in comics is for Sanders a much more central difference between comics and picturebooks than their formal characteristics. I follow the arguments put forward by Op de Beeck and Sanders in regarding philosophical and ideological, as well as social, factors as good starting points to separate picturebooks and comics. Nevertheless, since my literary analyses will focus on an eco*narratological* examination of multimodal texts, a discussion of some of the most common narrative strategies that set the two media apart from each other is in order.

3.1.1 Narrative strategies and characteristics in picturebooks

The interplay between words and pictures is central to the medium of the picturebook and entails some specificities. Picturebooks are defined by their use of both words and pictures that together create an entity. The degree to which pictures and verbal text are used in a work can vary greatly, as can how pictures and verbal text work together. Common definitions of the picturebook include the fact that pictures are found on each double-spread (Birkeland, Mjør, & Teigland, 2018). The notion of the entity formed with words and pictures and the necessity of both semiotic modes to create this entity also distinguishes picturebooks from illustrated texts. Nathalie Op de Beeck refers to a picturebook as "[c]ommonly […] recognized by its handheld format, its limited number of pages, its few words and pictures per page or spread, and its narrow paper and board binding" (Op de Beeck, 2018, p. 20). This shows that materiality is of some importance when it comes to picturebooks. In this section, I discuss general characteristics of picturebooks that are independent from questions of genre, which I will take up throughout the analyses when needed.

Picturebooks are multimodal texts. Gunther Kress (2010) defines a mode as "a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning.

Image, writing, layout, […] are examples of modes used in representation and communication" (p. 79). Picturebooks are a medium that employs the two semiotic modes of verbal text and pictures, and potentially even a third semiotic mode: the voice, often of an adult who reads to a child. Defining picturebooks as "multimodal texts" emphasizes that they need both semiotic modes to function and convey meaning. This specificity in how picturebooks communicate makes them a medium in their own right, instead of a certain genre in the wider field of children's literature. Attempts to categorize the different forms of interplay between words and pictures as *symmetrical*, *complementary*, or *contradictory* as suggested by, among others, Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) have, as David Lewis (2001) points out, their strengths and weaknesses, one important weakness being that picturebooks are too big a unit of examination in this respect because many picturebooks display different word-picture interrelations throughout a single narrative (pp. 38–44). Foregrounding the fact that picturebooks are "a particularly flexible form of text and […] in general are extraordinarily diverse" (Lewis, 2001, p. 44), Lewis suggests the term 'ecology' as a way to approach the relations between words and pictures in picturebooks. While I argue that 'ecology' as a metaphor in this context is inexact because it stems from another field of science, what Lewis does is emphasize the *interplay* between words and pictures, especially in the case of what Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) call 'symmetric' picturebooks. His argument is that the words always guide readers' attention to certain features of the pictures in a certain way and suggest what to pay attention to by mentioning certain aspects of the depicted situation or character, while leaving out others (Lewis, 2001, p. 39). Perry Nodelman (1996) also points to the influence words have on how readers look at pictures, but argues that this goes both ways, as pictures also influence how readers might interpret words (p. 240). Nodelman furthermore concludes that there are three stories in picturebooks: "the one told by the words, the one implied by the pictures, and the one that results from the combination of the other two" (p. 240). The use of the words "told", "implied", and "results" in reference to the three stories suggests that the creating of those three stories works in different ways and it seems like the pictorial story needs a more active reader who puts together that which is only implied instead of told openly on this narrative level. Also, it is only through discovering the implied visual story that the multimodal narrative can come forth.

While Lewis (2001) suggests that the words guide readers' attention toward pictures, he also writes that the "reading event" (p. 54) itself is regarded as a

reciprocal activity in which the reader is the central entity that brings together words and pictures to form meaning: "The words are brought to life by the pictures and the pictures by the words, but this is only possible in the experience of reading" (Lewis, 2001, p. 55). This points to Wolfang Iser's work on reader-response theory, where he carves out the idea that literary texts contain 'gaps' (*Leerstellen*) which readers are invited to subconsciously fill to be able to make sense of a narrative (Iser, 1978).[8]

Picturebooks demand highly active readers who put together words and pictures in various ways, since the interrelation between the two semiotic modes can change from double-spread to double-spread, and because picturebooks are themselves, as mentioned above, very flexible texts. Andrea Schwenke Wyile (2017) examines narrative spaces, which she relates to the ecological characteristics of picturebooks suggested by Lewis. She identifies narrative space as "a contemplative space that relies on the graphic space of the typographic page and readers' interactions with its story space" (Schwenke Wyile, 2017, p. 186). What becomes clear here is that the place where a narrative unfolds itself is in the interaction between its different layers and a reader. This interaction does also have different levels, because picturebooks often work with a double audience, as mentioned above. Thus, different parts of words and pictures might address adults and children differently or address one of the two more (or less) directly than the other.

Another influence on how the "story space" unfolds itself is the general reading direction of a picturebook. While adult readers in Western European cultures will probably start reading a spread in the top left corner, children who are not yet familiar with these conventions might start at a completely different point. The same may also be true for readers from cultures with where script is read from right to left, such as Arabic. The order in a spread is always culturally coded (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), although not all young readers will already be aware of these codes. Hence, they do not necessarily follow them. This can potentially change the order in which a story unfolds itself and how meaning is constructed throughout the reading process.

In picturebooks, the paratexts, and among those especially the peritexts (Genette, 1987), form an integral part of the reading experience of both adult and

[8] See section 3.2 for a discussion of Iser's concept of gaps and his take on the role of the reader more in general.

child readers. The cover gives the first impression of the narrative that follows, and Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) point to the fact that "picturebook covers always, without exception, display a picture" (p. 245). The cover often shows the main characters and possibly objects that will be important throughout the narrative. This also applies to titles of picturebooks, which are often nominal, consisting of the main character's name and/or important objects. Narrative titles are also quite common, "summ[ing] up the essence of the story" (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 243). As for the back side of the book, it might give a summary of the picturebook, or a teaser that seeks to motivate both adults and children to find out what the book will be about. Other paratextual features on the back of the book may include reading recommendations usually addressed to adult readers, advertising, for example, the didactic value of the book. Endpapers and title pages often help in setting the mood for the narrative, as they may show the main characters and encourage the child to enter the narrative and engage in the storyworld. The notion of paratexts raises the important point that picturebooks always convey adult views on childhood and on which values are considered important to teach children. This shows that picturebooks are a medium that is to a large degree regulated and controlled by adults, something that is very different with comics.

Another strategy specifically used in picturebooks that I want to mention here is the use of verbal and visual page-turners. This is a strategy to motivate children to keep reading or viewing and find out how the story continues (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, pp. 152–153). Verbal page-turners often take the form of questions (e.g., "What do you think will happen next?") or unfinished sentences ("But then…"). Visual page-turners in Western European picturebooks are mostly found in the lower right corner of a double-spread, thus also teaching readers from a Western European culture the conventional reading direction.

With these general narrative characteristics through which picturebooks operate in mind, I will now turn toward comics, before discussing the econarratological approach I use in my literary analyses in more detail.

3.1.2 Narrative strategies and characteristics in comics

Narratives in comics are usually presented in panels that are aligned in a grid on the page, with nine panels as a common layout. Using one page or even a double-spread for one picture in comics can thus function to emphasize what is being narrated, since it is a departure from the usual format (Saguisag, 2018, p. 316).

Generally speaking, time unfolds differently in comics as compared to picturebooks, because of the different use of pictures in relation to the pages. “If comics ordinarily depict movement in time within a single page, in picture books time tends to unfold over many pages” (Nel, 2012, p. 445). This underlines the way that a picture that occupies a whole page or even a double-spread breaks the pace of the narrative in comics quite markedly. It also indicates that the shape and size of a panel influences how readers perceive its temporal length. Panels in landscape format often set a slower pace or are used to set a mood because they appear to be more timeless than panels in the portrait format (McCloud, 1993, pp. 101–103).

Another common difference between comics and picturebooks lies in the “spatial relationships between words and pictures” (Saguisag, 2018, p. 316). In picturebooks, the verbal text is often placed slightly away from the pictures, or from the center of the pictures, at the top or bottom of a page, while in comics, both are usually nearer to each other, given the smaller size of panels compared to spreads. Another point is that “whereas picture books use speaker tags to make clear to a listening audience which character is attached to which bit of dialogue, comics use visual pointers – those angular objects attached to the ovals of word balloons – to demonstrate who is speaking when” (Sanders, 2013, p. 74). This also underlines Sanders’s point about the different reading audiences for picturebooks and comics, because the visual pointers in comics are better suited to a silent audience than to one where the text is meant to be read out loud (Sanders, 2013, p. 74). Comics also commonly use words as part of the picture: for example, in signs on buildings. These differences in the word-picture relationships are of course only tendencies, rather than fixed categories. However, they point to nuances that are important to observe when it comes to analyzing both kinds of texts.

A central narrative device in comics is the gutter, the space between two panels. It is here that the single panels are combined into a coherent narrative and the actions in a story take place. McCloud (1993) refers to the act of “closure”, the “phenomenon of *observing the parts* but *perceiving the whole*” (p. 63, emphases in the original), as the central process at work in the gutter. It is through this process, that storyworlds in comics are constructed and become dynamic. It is also at this point that readers take an active part in the reading process, because they must make connections between different panels to construct meaning. Since panels only show more or less static moments in time, readers perform the motional act in their minds to get from the state in one panel to the state in the

adjoining panel. McCloud (1993) refers to different types of "panel-to-panel transitions" (p. 70) that require different amounts of closure to be performed by readers. While "moment-to-moment" transitions require only a little closure, because the panels show moments that are temporally very closely related, "subject-to-subject" or "scene-to-scene" transitions rely on readers doing much more active work "to render these transitions *meaningful*" (McCloud, 1993, p. 71, emphasis in the original).

Typography is another essential stylistic device in comics. Much like picturebooks, comics usually contain less verbal text than written narratives. Since comics also most commonly operate without a classical narrator, they often charge words with pictorial or auditive qualities by using different typographic styles in speech balloons or as sound effects. Usually, the words that are emphasized in a sentence are written in bold or italic to mimic the tone of the speaker. Similarly, words can be written smaller or bigger to indicate the volume with which a character speaks. Text boxes at the upper or lower edges of panels, or verbal text that is displayed inside a panel without any frames, can be used as an intra- or extradiegetic narrative voice. Even speech balloons themselves vary in style "to depict sound in a strictly visual medium" (McCloud, 1993, p. 134). A jagged speech balloon containing capital letters usually indicates shouting, while a word like "screech" written in large bold letters next to tires can be an onomatopoetic way of indicating that a car is braking heavily and loudly.

Comics often use a simplified drawing style known as 'cartooning', which McCloud (1993) denotes as not only a drawing style but "a way of seeing" (p. 31). This refers on the one hand to a focus on the meaning of "specific details" that is amplified by taking away details that do not contribute to that meaning. On the other hand, the simplification often found in cartoons allows readers to see themselves in the drawings more easily because of the lack of realistic facial traits that would otherwise clearly depict another person. McCloud (1993) writes that everybody "sustains a constant awareness of his or her ***own*** face […] a sense of shape … a sense of **general placement**" (p. 36, emphases in the original), which explains why readers would see their own faces in more simplistic cartoon drawings. In addition, "[i]mages are most readable when they are easily recognized" (Eisner, 1996, p. 15), so the easier an image can be understood, the faster and more easily readers can relate to what they see. Another factor that accelerates the understanding of an image or of a certain character is comics' frequent use of stereotypical depictions. As Karin Kukkonen (2013) writes,

"[s]tereotypes are cognitive shortcuts that allow us to process the complexity of the actual world efficiently" (p. 16). They become problematic when they depict different people and cultures in a discriminatory way, but in general, stereotypes are often used to indicate, for example, whether a character has good or bad intentions depending on their posture, how they are dressed, or their general drawing style. This shows how important every artistic choice in the images in comics is and how they can influence readers' reactions to and interpretations of the narrative. Groensteen (2007) even argues that "narration passes first and principally (save for exceptions) by way of the images" (p. 11). I believe that this argument has some truth to it, given the strong emotional responses images can evoke in readers of comics (McCloud, 1993, p. 135) and the fact that the images usually occupy more (and, according to Groensteen, "more important") space in comics than the verbal text does (Groensteen, 2007, p. 8). However, I focus on the interplay between words and images and do not generally agree with focusing on a hierarchy between the two components when both are needed to constitute a meaningful narrative.

3.2 Relationships between reader and text

After having established some of the fundamental ways in which multimodal texts narrate by means of verbal text and pictures, I will highlight the role of readers in the context of reader-response theory, which can offer some fruitful perspectives on the narratives I analyze in Part II. This functions as a more general perspective of my understanding of reading as a communicative activity that unfolds between text and reader, which is an underlying assumption that informs my approach to the field of (eco)narratology and to the picturebooks and comics I examine. While econarratology draws heavily on cognitive narratology, a strand of research in which the reader takes a central position, I want to establish a broader understanding of reading as a dynamic interaction as a first step in my theoretical and methodological approach.

Before reader-response theory became established as a strand of research in the 1970s, several researchers had already started to take the reader seriously as a central agent for making meaning of narratives. One of the central figures in this context is Louise M. Rosenblatt. Influenced by the works of I. A. Richards (Wilson, 2021, p. 81), Rosenblatt writes that readers participate in imaginary situations where they make use of their own experiences when reading a text

(Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 37). She uses the term 'poem' to refer to literary texts, including works of poetry, drama, and narrative literature. She argues that a poem is an "event in time" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 12), meaning that a literary work arises in the reading process as something – an event – that happens between the work and the reader. Building on Dewey's terminology, she calls this process a 'transaction', and describes it as follows:

> The transaction is basically between the reader and what he senses the words as pointing to. The paradox is that he must call forth from memory of his world what the visual or auditory stimuli symbolize for him, yet he feels the ensuing work as part of the world outside himself. The physical signs of the text enable him to reach through himself and the verbal symbols to something sensed as outside and beyond his own personal world. The boundary between inner and outer world breaks down, and the literary work of art, as so often remarked, leads us into a new world. It becomes part of the experience which we bring to our future encounters in literature and in life. (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 21)

This points to the idea that readers make use of their own experiences in the reading process and highlights what other theorists have called a mental journey that happens during immersion in a literary work. It is important to note that Rosenblatt ascribes this kind of activity first and foremost to what she calls 'aesthetic' reading. She writes that "[*i*]*n aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during the relationship with that particular text*" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 25, emphasis in the original), and differentiates between aesthetic and what she calls 'efferent' reading, during which "the reader's attention is focused primarily on what will remain as the residue *after* the reading" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 23, emphasis in the original). However, Rosenblatt clarifies that in aesthetic reading too, the text and its linguistic cues are what guides readers' imagination, as opposed to "a simple reverie or train of free associations" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 29). My project considers both aesthetic and efferent reading. With regard to how the texts I examine cue readers to construct the storyworlds of the narratives, the dimension of aesthetic reading comes to the fore. However, when it comes to the didactic potential of the narratives, the notion of efferent reading also comes in. Thus, both dimensions are intertwined in my project.

I will discuss some of the cognitive strategies readers use to construct storyworlds more in detail in subsection 3.3.2. However, an overriding principle that is important for my work and that also connects well with Rosenblatt's understanding of reading as a transactional event is prevalent in Wolfgang Iser's works. In the heterogenous field of reader-response theory, Susan Suleiman (2014) classifies Iser's approach as phenomenological, according to which "[t]he act of reading is defined as essentially a sense-making activity, consisting of the complementary activities of selection and organization, anticipation and retrospection, the formulation and modification of expectations in the course of the reading process" (pp. 22-23). In Iser's approach, reading is defined as an "*interaction* between the structure of the literary work and its recipient" (Freund, 2013, p. 141, emphasis in the original), which recalls Rosenblatt's description of reading as an 'event'. Iser emphasizes that the literary work only exists in this very interaction because both the text and the reader are needed to realize the literary work. Iser describes his understanding of the implied reader and writes that

> [the implied reader] embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect – predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself. Consequently, the implied reader as a concept has its roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader. […] The concept of the implied reader is therefore a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient without necessarily defining him: this concept prestructures the role to be assumed by each recipient, and this holds true even when texts deliberately appear to ignore their possible recipient or actively exclude him. Thus the concept of the implied reader designates a network of response-inviting structures, which impel the reader to grasp the text. (Iser, 1978, p. 34)

What becomes clear here is the idea that texts contain invitations for readers to respond to what they are reading, which gives readers the opportunity to accept these invitations in order to actualize the literary work. However, while the text contains the invitations, it is up to actual readers how they react to them. This aspect of the implied reader points to another well-known concept of Iser's, which is that of textual 'gaps' (*Leerstellen*) that readers unconsciously fill in during the reading process. He describes the communicative situation between text and reader

as asymmetrical because the reading process lacks the directness of an actual conversation. Iser writes that "it is the gaps, the fundamental asymmetry between text and reader, that give rise to the communication in the reading process" (Iser, 1978, p. 167). While readers fill the textual gaps with their "projections" (that is, with experiences and associations from their real lives), the text must also control the readerly activity to some degree in order for the communication to be successful (Iser, 1978, pp. 167–168). To underline the manifold interaction between text and reader, Iser describes the reader's viewpoint as 'wandering', "bringing forth a network of perspectives, within which each perspective opens a view not only of others, but also of the intended imaginary object" (Iser, 1980, p. 113).

Iser's approach to reader-response theory has been criticized for several reasons by other scholars in the field. For example, Stanley Fish disagrees with Iser when it comes to the question of how much is supplied by the text itself and how much by its readers. Citing Fish's review of Iser's *The Act of Reading*, Elizabeth Freund writes that "[f]or Fish, nothing is given, and the reader supplies '*everything:* the stars in a literary text are not fixed; they are just as variable as the lines that join them'" (Freund, 2013, p. 149, emphasis in the original). Freund writes that this fundamental disagreement is not only a point of debate between Fish and Iser, but it highlights "the two basic and basically irreconcilable positions between which reader-response criticism moves, […] which are frequently identified with the terms objectivity and subjectivity" (Freund, 2013, p. 151). Susan Suleiman (2014) points to some ambiguity remaining in Iser's theory. Regarding Iser's argument that readers are necessary to realize the text through the reading process but that the text guides the interpretation, Suleiman notes that "his [Iser's – B. H.] discussion implies that only a limited number of patterns are realizable for a given text […]. And more importantly, his own readings of specific works […] leave no doubt that he considers some realizations more correct, more true to the intentions of the text, than others" (Suleiman, 2014, pp. 23–24). In other words, Iser's approach seems to be more open on paper than it is in his own practice (Suleiman, 2014, p. 24). I thus regard Iser's theory first and foremost as a broader view on how readers make meaning of narratives, the more specific aspects of which I seek to ground in cognitive narratology and econarratology, rather than in reader-response theory.

However, looking at reading as an interactive process is an approach that fundamentally informs my project. In this context, it is also interesting to take a

look at how readers' roles develop as readers themselves develop throughout their lives. While this will not be a major theme throughout my analyses, the fact that child and young adult readers are still in their development should not be neglected either, because this has some consequences for a text's communication with its readers.

J. A. Appleyard (1991) has shed light on how children evolve as readers. Some of his arguments are also important for my project. Appleyard identifies five broad roles readers go through during their development, and that he looks at as "useful tools for thinking about much of the observable behavior of readers in the culture we inhabit" (p. 16). The first three of those stages are of interest for me here, since they consider children and young adults in their roles as readers. Even though my project is not concerned with "observable behaviors of readers", some general insights from Appleyard's work are still fruitful to take into account when it comes to the relationship between text and readers. The first role Appleyard assigns to readers is that of players, specifying that "the child, not yet a reader but a listener to stories, becomes a confident player in a fantasy world that imagines realities, fears, and desires in forms that the child slowly learns to sort out and control" (p. 14). As children develop the ability to read themselves, Appleyard describes their role generally as that of the hero or heroine, and writes that "[t]he school-aged child is the central figure of a romance that is constantly being rewritten as the child's picture of the world and how people behave in it is filled in and clarified" (p. 14). He emphasizes reading as both "a means of discovering new facts and ideas", and as "a way of exploring an inner world" (p. 59). This dual function of reading also points to Rosenblatt's distinction between efferent and aesthetic reading. In the reader's role as hero or heroine, Appleyard highlights the significance of the adventure genre as the dominant genre children are confronted with around the age of seven to twelve. Building on Piaget, Appleyard calls readers around that age "concrete, dualistic thinkers; a thing is either in one category or in another" (p. 74) and argues that this is due to their self-concept not yet being fully developed.

As children enter the stage of adolescence, Appleyard mainly ascribes the role of the thinker to them when it comes to reading. He writes that "[t]the adolescent reader looks to stories to discover insights into the meaning of life, values and beliefs worthy of commitment, ideal images, and authentic role models for imitation" (p. 14). He names realism as a central metric by which adolescent readers judge the literary texts they engage with because, as he writes, "adolescent

readers make judgements about the truthfulness of what they read *to their own experience* [emphasis added]" (p. 108). This underlines once more the communicative dimension of reading, in which readers also reflect on what they have read in terms of their own experiences in the actual world. I will discuss the influence of this ongoing interaction between text and reader that influences both participants more in detail later, when I address cognitive narratology and the mental construction of storyworlds.

3.3 Narratology, multimodal narratology and econarratology

One of the most basic questions that many scholars who examine narrative texts ask about their object of investigation is what constitutes a narrative in the first place. Broadly speaking, a narrative, or what will in this context be called 'story', has for example been described as "a succession of events" (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 2). Another definition of 'story' is "a fabula that is presented in a certain manner. A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors. An *event* is the transition from one state to another state" (Bal, 1997, p. 5, emphasis in the original). With these examples, it is possible to see that a story is commonly defined in terms of events – however few, as long as there are more than one – that happen to entities capable of experiencing them. The study of stories has a long history in Western and non-Western cultures. In the context of my project, narratology, or "the study of the logic, principles, and practices of narrative representations" (Meister, 2009, p. 329), is of central importance and interest. This specific branch of literary studies has, since its coinage as *narratologie* in 1969 by Tzvetan Todorov, grown in different directions. Originally, narratology denominated "a science of narrative modelled after the 'pilot-science' of Saussure's structural linguistics" (Herman, Jahn, & Ryan, 2005, p. ix).

Of course, a structured and formal examination of narrative texts has existed before it was given the name used today. The earliest predecessors of narratology can be found in Greek works by Plato, who distinguished between *diegesis* and *mimesis* "or, in modern terms, between *telling* and *showing*" (Chatman, 1978, p. 32, emphases in the original), and Aristotle, who defined the *mythos* as the plot which is "a subset of events, chosen and arranged according to aesthetic contradictions" (Meister, 2009, p. 333). Thus, he differentiated between the totality of events and the events that are actually narrated. Today, the origins of narratology

are closely related to French structuralism, which, according to Meister (2009) "gave the decisive impulse for the formation of narratology as a methodologically coherent, structure-oriented variant of narrative theory" (p. 337). Informed by Russian formalism, structuralists engaged in the examination of the concepts of *fabula* and *sujet*, which Genette (1980) named *histoire* and *récit*, while Chatman (1978) chose the terms *story* and *discourse*. In all cases, a distinction is made between 'what' is being told as the fabula/histoire/story, and 'how' it is being told as the sujet/récit/discourse. A particularly important forerunner of structuralist narratology was Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, where Propp deduced significant functions and actions from Russian folktales and discussed how they are distributed in a story (Herman, 2005, p. 572).

However, it is the works of Genette that are commonly most closely associated with structuralist narratology. Generally speaking, his terminology has become "the narratological *lingua franca*" (Meister, 2009, p. 338, emphasis in the original), and is still widely used today, although some of his concepts have been contested since their development. In his fundamental work *Narrative Discourse*, Genette meticulously examines Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* and describes different phenomena concerning three basic narrative categories he adopts from Tzvetan Todorov: "that of *tense*, 'in which the relationship between the time of the story and the time of the discourse is expressed'; that of *aspect*, 'or the way in which the story is perceived by the narrator'; that of *mood*, in other words, 'the type of discourse used by the narrator'" (Genette, 1980, p. 29). Genette examines different levels of narrative and foregrounds the important differences between story and discourse.

Other important structuralist influences on the formation of the field of narratology include Todorov's eponymous *Grammaire du Décaméron* from 1969, in which he "borrowed categories from traditional grammars to compare narrated entities and agents with nouns, actions and events with verbs, and properties with adjectives" (Herman, 2005, p. 574), and the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who, building on Propp's work on Russian folktales, labelled 'mythemes' as the segments that constitute a myth (Herman, 2005). Lévi-Strauss argues that a myth's "substance does not lie in its style, its original music, or its syntax, but in the *story* which it tells" (Lévi-Strauss, 1955, p. 430, emphasis in the original). He writes that "[m]yth, like the rest of language, is made up of constituent units" (Lévi-Strauss, 1955, p. 431) and it is the combination of these units that constitute the meaning of a myth. Identifying several "basic logical processes which are at the root of

mythical thought" (Lévi-Strauss, 1955, p. 440), it is possible to read an anticipation of the interest in the cognitive processes involved in constructing meaning in narratives that emerged as narratology developed, and that are of central relevance to my project. A. J. Greimas gave "to the structure evolved by Lévi-Strauss the status of deep narrative structure" (Greimas, 1971, p. 796). Similar to Lévi-Strauss's concept of 'mythemes', Greimas identified 'deep narrative structures' as structures that underlie narrative texts and are units that are used to constitute a narrative meaning, while they "are not in themselves narrative" (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 10). Furthermore, Greimas "classified [characters] according to their function in the fabula" (Ryan & Van Alphen, 1993, p. 112), a function which he built "not according to what they [characters – B. H.] are but according to what they do" (Barthes, 1977, p. 106), which explains why he chose the term 'actants' for characters. These concepts developed by both Greimas and Lévi-Strauss examine structural functions at work in narratives much like linguistic functions that underlie language, which underlines the tight connection between linguistics and early narratology.

After the prime of structuralist narratology, poststructuralism had an influence on the field during the 1980s, especially in the form of "a widening of narratology's scope beyond literary narrative and the importing of concepts and theories from other disciplines" (Meister, 2009, p. 339), although a call for an interdisciplinary approach to narratology had already been formulated early on (Herman et al., 2005, p. ix). Indeed, as Genette discusses the "temporal duality" (Genette 1980, p. 33) of *Erzählzeit* and *erzählte Zeit* (which he calls narrative time and story time), he points to comic strips as a form where this duality might be "less relevant" (p. 33), something which I argue is not entirely true, as will be seen in the next subsection. However, Genette does also point out that "while making up sequences of images and thus requiring a successive or diachronic reading, [other forms of narrative expression such as the comic strip] also lend themselves to, and even invite, a kind of global and synchronic look" (p. 34).[9]

Deconstructivist as well as psychological concepts also informed different directions in narratology. The confluence of narratological concepts with theories from other fields challenged fundamental structuralist premises that had shaped the field in the two previous decades. As Ryan and Van Alphen (1993) write, "[t]he

[9] This roughly corresponds to the construction of both a global and a local storyworld prevalent in various multimodal texts. See subsection 3.3.3.for further discussion.

structuralist doctrine of the non-referentiality of literary language was challenged by the view that reference does not presuppose actual existence or truth in the real world" (p. 114). The inclusion of concepts from other disciplines led to what Kreiswirth (1995) named the "narrative turn", whose characteristics Herman describes as "uncoupling theories of *narrative* from theories of the *novel*, and shifting scholarly attention from a particular genre of literary writing to all discourse (or, in an even wider interpretation, all semiotic activities) that can be interpreted as narratively organized" (Herman, 2009a, p. 24, emphases in the original). In other words, the narrative turn has led to a broader view of what narrative is. While this has brought forth some productive approaches in the humanities, I follow Erin James in arguing that not all kinds of representation are narrative because I understand narrative to be inherently anthropogenic (James, 2022, pp. 68–69). Instead, a differentiated and specific use of the term is more helpful to understand how humans construct and understand the world they inhabit (James, 2022, pp. 13–14).

The development of narratology as a field of research in literary studies shows itself to have been preoccupied with the question of where and how meaning is constituted in a narrative. The sectioning of narratives into fabula/histoire/story and sujet/récit/discourse – as well as, for example, Lévi-Strauss's concept of mythemes – shows that researchers have investigated which elements constitute meaning in narratives. The narrative turn, and the combination of narratology with other research fields eventually led to the establishment of what Herman calls 'postclassical narratology', which has widened the field in different ways.

3.3.1 Postclassical narratology and fictional worlds

Econarratology builds on postclassical narratology, especially on Herman's approach to the field:

> Postclassical narratology (which should not be conflated with poststructuralist theories of narrative) contains classical narratology as one of its "moments" but is marked by a profusion of new methodologies and research hypotheses: the result is a host of new perspectives on the forms and functions of narrative itself. Further, in its postclassical phase, research on narrative does not just expose the limits but also exploits the possibilities of the older, structuralist models. In much the same way, postclassical

> physics does not simply discard classical Newtonian models, but rather rethinks their conceptual underpinnings and reassesses their scope of applicability. (Herman, 1999, pp. 2–3)

Postclassical narratology is generally less text-centered and universalist and "seem[s] to move toward a grand contextual, historical, pragmatic and reader-oriented effort" (Alber & Fludernik, 2010, p. 6). Ansgar Nünning maps out some of the differences and developments in classical and postclassical narratology. He also challenges the usage of the singular term 'narratology' in relation to such a broad field and in areas that are less tightly connected to the initial field of narratology as it originated from structuralism (Nünning, 2003). The reason for this variety in the field can be found in the increased interest in "story-telling, both as an object of study and as a mode of scholarly writing" (Nünning, 2003, p. 240) during approximately the last three decades.

Herman's work is strongly connected to cognitive narratology and can be situated on the more theory-heavy end of the scale that Nünning opens up between the under- and over-theorized poles of narratology (Nünning, 2003, p. 256). Herman's approach combines narratology, cognitive science, and reception theory (Nünning, 2003, p. 261) and consequently extends the field of narratology. Another factor that had a strong influence on the development of narratology is the widening of the field in relation to the media that are being examined. Transmedial narratology is among the directions that are also fundamental for my project, as it includes the discussion of comics and picturebooks as media that combine verbal text and pictures and thus pose new questions to narratology, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Fundamental for econarratology – and therefore also for my project – is Herman's model of the storyworld. It is influenced by different notions of how readers create meaning while making sense of narratives in whatever form they may appear. While the different elements that are combined in the concept of the storyworld are not themselves new, Herman uses insights from different fields to better understand and characterize "what narrative is" (Herman, 2002, p. 2). As mentioned above, this widens the field – but it does so without weakening the specific use of the term 'narrative'. The concept of the storyworld makes it possible to work narratologically with an open mind and to acknowledge the importance of context, which is also central in econarratology. As becomes apparent through the

reader's central position, the connection between the extratextual world and the storyworld is of decisive significance (James, 2015, pp. 20–21).

One of the fundamental influences on Herman's model of the storyworld is Lubomír Doležel's theory of fictionality based on possible-worlds philosophy. He builds his theory on contemporary possible-worlds semantics that first emerged in the 1960s and drew on Leibnizian thinking. Doležel states, however, that "[c]ontemporary thinking about possible worlds is not metaphysical. Possible worlds do not await discovery in some remote or transcendent depository, they are *constructed* [emphasis added] by the creative activities of human minds and hands" (Doležel, 1998, p. 14). Because possible worlds of fiction are constructed in a specific medium, Doležel calls them "semiotic objects" (pp. 15–16). This is one of the basic differences between possible worlds in philosophy and the possible worlds of fiction, or fictional worlds. While Doležel argues that fictional worlds behave like possible worlds in certain aspects (e.g., both are "ensembles of nonactualized possible states of affairs"; p. 16), they also possess features that distinguish them from possible worlds in philosophy. For example, fictional worlds are incomplete, "simply because they are based in finite fictional texts" (Fořt, 2016, p. 48), which always makes it possible to imagine something that might happen after a story has ended. The finite text does not preclude possible events that might take place before or after the events told in a narrative. In contrast to this, possible worlds in philosophy are characterized by their "complete or completely determinate structures" (Doležel, 1998, p. 22).

What is of central interest about Doležel's model of fictional worlds[10] in the context of my project is his emphasis on the constructedness of fictional worlds and their reliance on semiotic systems, as well as their incompleteness. A fictional world only comes into being in and through the reader who engages with a given fictional text. Furthermore, according to Doležel, fictional worlds create something genuinely new, since "the author creates a fictional world that was not available prior to this act" (Doležel, 1998, p. 23). This notion underlines what Herman calls "the world-creating power of narrative" (Herman, 2002, p. 14), a power he locates more in the interpreter of a narrative than its author. Herman assigns this power a central position in his concept, which is taken up in the term 'storyworld'. Both

[10] In the scope of my work, it is only possible to give a very rough overview over some of the central points of Doležel's model that inform the concept of the storyworld. For a detailed discussion of fictional and possible worlds, see *Heterocosmica* (Doležel, 1998).

the fact that readers create a whole world in their minds and the fact that this happens through a story – a work of fiction – are reflected in Herman's term.

3.3.2 The concept of the storyworld

Herman defines storyworlds as "mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which recipients relocate – or make a deictic shift – as they work to comprehend a narrative" (Herman, 2002, p. 9) and distinguishes them from the notion of story, which is "*what* happened as opposed to the *way* in which what happened is recounted" (p. 13), the discourse. Instead, the storyworld "better captures what might be called the ecology of narrative interpretation" (Herman, 2002, p. 13), which includes the interplay between different relevant aspects of a story. This definition is very general, and indeed, Ryan and Bell (2019) generally point to the relative lack of theorization concerning the term, considering the term's "newly found prominence" (p. 29). In this section, I will discuss Herman's approach to the storyworld, and his foregrounding of the cognitive processes involved in constructing this mental model. To fully grasp what constitutes a storyworld, I want to also consider the definition of storyworlds formulated by Marie-Laure Ryan (2019), which describes "storyworlds as totalities that encompass space, time, and individual existents who undergo transformations as the result of events" (p. 63). I understand the difference between Herman's and Ryan's takes on the storyworld to be more one of emphasis than one of content. While Herman foregrounds storyworlds' quality as mental models, Ryan's emphasis lies on their being "totalities that encompass" various elements. However, both authors include the same set of components in their definitions: entities that are able to experience events, as well as the temporal and spatial context in which these events are experienced. The two definitions of the storyworld overlap quite strongly, which is why I combine both to formulate a clear concept of how I will use the concept in this thesis.

Ryan (2019) develops her concept of the storyworld by comparing (and contrasting) it to fictional worlds, which build on Doležel's model that was discussed in the previous subsection. Ryan argues that "the notion of storyworld is broader than the more traditional term *fictional world*" (p. 62, emphasis in the original) and describes their relation as "one of overlap: some storyworlds are not fictional, some fictional worlds are not storyworlds, but most imaginary worlds are both" (p. 63). It is important to note at this point, that Ryan does not define

storyworlds strictly in relation to written narrative texts, but in a broader sense that is also applicable to other narrative media, such as video games, films, or comics. And while, for example, descriptions are often considered to be a different text type than narrative (p. 63), Ryan (2019) argues for their belonging to the notion of narrative "because they contribute as much to the image of this world as the report of events" (p. 64). In my project, descriptions occupy a somewhat less conflicted role because most descriptions are situated on the visual, rather than the verbal, level of the narrative. However, while the descriptions in the works I examine are largely non-verbal, I fully subscribe to Ryan's view that description is "an integral dimension of narrativity" (Ryan, 2019, p. 64) – not least because spatial aspects of narrative are also central to an econarratological examination of fictional texts. Ryan specifies some basic aspects of storyworlds in relation to three reference values: distance, size, and completeness. She suggests applying "ontological rules" (p. 65) to identify how close or far away a storyworld is positioned in relation to the actual world and argues that, contrary to possible worlds as formulated in philosophy, storyworlds do not have to follow rules of logic, but can indeed be impossible on both pragmatic and logical levels. Ryan writes that logical impossibilities such as time travel "do not contaminate the entire storyworld" and can be overlooked by readers by means of a "Swiss cheese strategy" (Ryan, 2019, p. 66). Kendall Walton (1990) calls the ability to overlook logical inconsistencies in fiction "the principle of charity", which I will come back to shortly.

Talking about the sizes of storyworlds, Ryan (2019) discusses "the minimal conditions for a text to create a storyworld" (p. 68), and emphasizes that a storyworld has "the ability to stimulate the imagination" (p. 69), which does not necessarily hold true for any minimal narrative that relates at least two events. Here, Ryan touches upon the notion of 'worldness' and concludes that "when a text creates a storyworld, *we imagine that there is more to this world than what the text represents*" (p. 70, emphasis in the original). This underlines that while the reporting of events might comply with the requirements of a story, it does not necessarily entail a storyworld, which stimulates other faculties – those of imagination – in recipients' minds.

As mentioned, Herman's approach to the storyworld focuses more on its cognitive aspects than on ontological ones. While he includes the question of "who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion" (Herman, 2002, p. 9), Herman does not elaborate on these aspects very much, but instead focuses on the way in which the "mental models" (p. 9), which is how he

characterizes storyworlds, are constructed in readers' minds. He does state that making sense of a narrative includes not only what happens, but also the (spatial and temporal) context in which events happen and the characters involved, as well as their attributes. Herman describes his use of the term 'storyworld' as "more or less analogous with linguists' use of the term *discourse model*", which he, similarly to storyworlds, defines as "a global mental representation enabling interlocutors to draw inferences about items and occurrences either explicitly or implicitly included in a discourse" (Herman, 2002, p. 5), and later also as "emergent, dynamic interpretive frames that interlocutors collaboratively construct in order to make sense of an ongoing stretch of talk" (p. 19). The emphasis here lies on the dynamic of the model, which describes the ongoing construction of meaning in recipients' minds while reading a narrative. What distinguishes Herman's 'storyworld' from a 'discourse model', is his integration of insights from different areas to form an understanding of the cognitive processes involved in making sense of narratives.

How, then, do recipients construct a storyworld and manage to immerse themselves in a narrative? Two fundamentally important theories Herman uses as a background are Marie-Laure Ryan's 'principle of minimal departure' and 'Deictic Shift Theory'. The 'principle of minimal departure' comes from the field of possible-worlds semantics and states that readers use their knowledge about the actual world they live in to construct a holistic mental model of a storyworld. Moreover, Ryan (1991) argues that "[w]e will project upon these worlds everything we know about reality, and we will make only the adjustments dictated by the text" (p. 51). Thus, readers stay as close to what they know as possible, which also enables them to immerse themselves into a storyworld. Another factor that comes into play in this context is the notion of 'make-believe' to which Ryan refers. Building on Kendall Walton (1990), she observes that the ability to emotionally immerse oneself into a narrative and believe what is happening there, is connected to a moment of 'make-believe', where recipients know that what they are being told is not true in the actual world or is not something that really happened in the actual world, but they act as if it were true in order to be able to immerse themselves in the narrative at hand. Walton argues that through pretending what we read in a narrative is true, it becomes possible for us to be emotionally invested in it and empathize with its characters. The 'principle of minimal departure' furthermore points to the importance of Wolfgang Iser's

concept of gaps (*Leerstellen*) in narratives, which readers unconsciously fill to be able to understand and interpret a given work of fiction (Iser, 1978).

'Deictic Shift Theory' (DST) pays attention to the question of how the text performs a deictic shift that requires readers to relocate into the fictional world presented in a narrative and to position themselves in relation to the characters in the text, their temporal and spatial relations to each other, and the narrative voice. As Peter Stockwell (2002) argues, the medium of the book itself already partakes in the deictic shifts occurring when readers engage with narratives, since readers know by convention that they will start to read a certain kind of text and are prepared to build mental models of other worlds when opening a book. By using characters' names, their points of view, possessive pronouns, and other relational terms that indicate temporal or spatial aspects, as well as aspects of movement, readers are guided to orient themselves inside this network of relational structures so as to be able to model the storyworld narrated. Thus, recipients combine what they know of the actual world with what they read (or watch, or hear, depending on the narrative medium) to build the storyworld, while the narrative also gives them linguistic cues to relocate to this storyworld. DST is especially interesting when we think about the importance of not only the temporal but also the spatial aspects of readers' relocation to a storyworld, something that is especially prevalent in econarratology. The 'principle of minimal departure' and DST reflect what Herman (2002) calls the "top-down and bottom-up" (p. 5) operating modes of storyworlds that happen simultaneously: interpreters use their knowledge about the actual world they inhabit to model what they read, while the narrative itself gives them cues, which enables them (1) to specify what happens when, to whom, and in what context and (2) to make necessary adjustments from the actual world to relocate to a storyworld.

The last important influences on Herman's approach to narratology that I want to discuss here are the concepts of scripts, frames, and schemata coming from the fields of psychology and Artificial Intelligence (AI), which can explain readers' expectations and how they help to build the storyworld. Herman (2002) argues that those concepts "describe knowledge representations storing past experiences" (p. 85) and foregrounds the role of scripts in this context as a concept that "help[s] explain the difference between a mere sequence of actions or occurrences and a narratively organized sequence" (p. 85). Drawing on AI research, Herman emphasizes that scripts are connected to certain expectations of what will happen in a specific situation, something which enables humans to know

and distinguish between different everyday situations. To specify how the notion of narrative enters scripts, Herman (2002) argues that narratives also relate to "how the form of a sequence is anchored in – or triggers a recipient to activate – knowledge about the world" (p. 90). Here, it becomes very clear that narratives generally work with recipients' minds with the same mechanisms as nonnarrative reports do, but narratives trigger different contextual implications and reactions because of their "narrativehood, […] what makes readers and listeners deem stories to be stories" (p. 90). So, the scripts readers develop throughout their lives enable them to understand and make sense of the various cues given to them in narratives, be they verbal, visual or auditive.

Concerning the role of scripts in children's literature more specifically, Herman states that "children's fictions consolidate and reinforce the scripts on which narrative competence itself depends. Such fictions teach reading by teaching scripts" (Herman, 2002, p. 111), unlike fiction directed at older readers that "problematize[s] a world that readers only think they know" (p. 111). While I would argue that consolidating scripts is one of the many important aspects of children's literature, I refrain from subscribing to the implication that Herman makes in contrasting the consolidation of scripts in children's literature with the role scripts play in literature for older audiences. Instead, I argue that the roles of scripts in children's literature are varied. And while they can consolidate scripts and thus teach children reading (fiction), there is also an abundance of examples of children's literature that subverts scripts and plays with reader expectations. I will come back to this point in the course of the literary analyses in the second part of this thesis.

In this subsection, I have discussed the storyworld as a concept that is central for my analytical work. Combining Ryan's and Herman's approaches to the storyworld allows me to have a precise concept of which aspects of a narrative constitute storyworlds – a narrative's space, time, and characters, as well as other entities capable of experiencing – while also being attentive to the cognitive dimensions incorporated in this mental model. This is especially fruitful with regard to multimodal texts as it allows me to consider the interplay between verbal text and pictures in constituting storyworlds on a nuanced level. Furthermore, the cognitive dimensions of how readers construct storyworlds will also help me to pay attention to the specificities of narratives' storyworlds for young readers, since didactic implications, as well as ideological and moral ones, play a role in these texts.

The special cognitive characteristics of storyworlds as they were presented in this section revolve around their combination of insights from different areas into one working model of how recipients mentally construct storyworlds while interpreting a narrative, with a specific focus on the processual qualities this includes. Furthermore, Herman's approach to the storyworld emphasizes an interaction that happens between recipients and narratives when the former emotionally (as well as bodily – see also subsection 3.3.4) engage in the latter. This also points to the importance of the processes that are going on. While the basic structures of how these processes work are generally the same for all human beings, the experience of a storyworld and the information accessible to form a storyworld will be different for every recipient. What underlies all the aspects of Herman's approach I have discussed so far is that they enrich narratology with insights from other fields, especially from cognitive science. Herman and other researchers have not only discussed narratological questions with respect to written narratives such as novels, but they have also looked at multimodal narratives to see how verbal text and pictures work together to create complex narrative structures.

3.3.3 Narratology and multimodal texts

The call for an interdisciplinary approach to the examination of narrative was formulated early on by theorists such as Barthes (1977), but most narratological research remained focused on written literary texts. However, some researchers, such as Seymour Chatman, did examine film as well as literary fiction with regard to the various structures at work as early as the late 1970s. While Jan-Noël Thon (2016) points to the fact that Chatman's work "largely ignores narrative media beyond literary texts and films" (p. 4), it remains fundamental regarding the establishment of transmedial narratology. Chatman (1978) distinguishes between the aesthetic object, which "is the story as articulated by the discourse", and the medium, which "actualizes the narrative, makes it into a real object" (p. 27). He notes that "the reader must unearth the virtual narrative by penetrating its medial surface" (p. 27), which comes down to the transition from reading to what he calls 'reading out', meaning that "one works through to the deeper narrative level" (p. 41), an expression that alludes to Greimas's and Lévi-Strauss's concepts of underlying narrative structures that constitute the meaning of a narrative. Here, too, the importance of the reader for the constitution of meaning in a narrative

becomes apparent, for it is in the process of decoding the "deeper narrative level" that meaning is being created. Later in this chapter, the special importance of a highly active reader when it comes to picturebooks and comics will be discussed further.

Much transmedial narratological research can be associated with more modern, postclassical narratological approaches that have diverse perspectives on narratives and the media through which they are represented. Comics and picturebooks are media where verbal text and pictures are intertwined, making them a unity that requires both reading and viewing to be decoded. As Ryan and Thon (2014) write, "stories and their worlds are crucially shaped by the affordances and limitations of the media in which they are realized" (p. 2). Therefore, it is necessary to discuss a narratological approach to multimodal texts specifically, before turning toward econarratology. In subsections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, I discussed some central differences in how picturebooks and comics narrate using verbal text and pictures. But as already mentioned there, both media will be treated together here. The reasons for this are, on the one hand, the many similarities between the two media. Both picturebooks and comics can partly be analyzed employing terminology from film studies regarding some aspects of the analytical discussion of their visual components. Furthermore, both request a highly active reader who has to combine verbal text and visual signs to make meaning of the work. Much as in written fictional texts, a relocation into the storyworld of the narrative is taking place in a picturebook or comic – only in these cases, this relocation works on the grounds of both verbal and visual cues. Thus, a narratological approach to this kind of fictional text takes two semiotic modes into account, which also means that the concept of the storyworld must be examined on a verbal as well as on a visual level. The *interplay* between words and pictures is of particular interest here since both parts combined constitute the storyworld the recipients experience. On the other hand, narratological interest in comics has grown over the last decades, while the same is not true for picturebooks. Therefore, a big part of this subsection will rely on research on comics, although I argue that many of the basic narratological methods can also be applied to picturebooks, with obvious medium-specific exceptions such as the meaning of the gutter for the construction of the storyworld in comics.

As Ryan and Thon (2014) write in their introduction to transmedial narratology, narratological concepts stand in diverse relations to different media. While categories such as 'event' or 'character' may be applicable to all narrative

media, and a category like ‘interactivity’ to at least some media (e.g., video games), concepts such as the gutter are specific to one medium: comics (pp. 3–4). This makes it important to examine which options of representation are available to which kinds of narrative media. My project is focused on picturebooks and comics, which are “multimodal texts – that is, texts that use a variety of signs, such as image, language, and sound” (Ryan, 2014, p. 28). Ryan points to the difficulty of defining both ‘mode’ and ‘medium’ and refers to Kress’s definition, which posits, for example, a text as a mode and a book as a medium of this mode. But Ryan herself chooses another approach to what she calls “media-conscious narratology” in her chapter with the corresponding subtitle. One of her suggested approaches, which aligns most closely with the aims of my project, is a “semiotic approach, which investigates the narrative power of language, image, sound, movement, face-to-face interaction, and the various combinations of these features” (Ryan, 2014, p. 30). This emphasis on the “narrative power” meshes well with the world-creating power that is of central interest in the narratological approach outlined in the previous section.

The storyworld in a multimodal text has, of course, the special characteristic that it consists of both verbal text and pictures. As Herman writes, “[i]n graphic novels, […] the non-verbal elements play a more prominent role” (Herman, 2009b, p. 75), which is also true for picturebooks. In a chapter on narratological comics analysis, Jan-Noël Thon (2019) discusses the concept of the storyworld and points to the ‘principle of minimal departure’ as a key element in constructing the storyworld in a comic, which corresponds with Herman’s emphasis of this very principle. In addition, Thon foregrounds Kendall Walton’s ‘principle of charity’, which complements Ryan’s concept (Thon, 2019, p. 76) and allows recipients to ignore or at least downplay some aspects or circumstances in fiction which might seem paradoxical and could impede their imagination. This can be important when verbal text and pictures present different scenes that most certainly do not line up temporally with each other. Thon also points to the importance of narratological examination regarding the representation of global and local storyworlds. This is a quite common circumstance in comics, where single stories often take place in a larger universe. Analyzing the relationships between local and global storyworlds often poses substantial cognitive challenges for readers (Thon, 2019, p. 78). This might occur when a character tells a story to another character, with some panels showing the act of narrating and others showing parts of the story that is being narrated. Another narrative strategy might show different levels of consciousness

by depicting dreaming characters as well as pictures of their dreams. Here, recipients have to reconstruct both what is being shown in which panel, and how the panels are related to one another. This can furthermore be a strategy to display different diegetic levels with or without verbal cues regarding the deictic *push* into a 'deeper' narrative level or the *pop* to a 'higher' one (Stockwell, 2002). There are of course also verbal and visual cues to mark such transitions in written narratives (e.g., a blank line), but my concern here is the special tools that multimodal narratives can use to construct storyworlds. Thus, pictures that, for example, show scenes from dreams or an embedded story, 'push' readers to a deeper level of a narration, while the return to the framing narrative 'pops' readers back to a higher narrative level.

Other factors that are of great interest in a narratological analysis of multimodal texts are the narrator and the subjective perspectives of the characters, or more generally the point of view. The question of subjectivity is an especially interesting one, since we rarely observe a picturebook or comic through the eyes of the protagonist but are more likely to see them from the outside, while "[t]he introspective narrator has, together with the first-person narrator, become one of the most common narrator types in contemporary psychological children's novels" (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, pp. 118–119). Subjectivity can, however, be accomplished on a visual level through certain perspectives such as over-the-shoulder shots (Abel & Klein, 2016, p. 97). Insights into characters' thoughts are, especially in comics, usually represented through thought balloons which portray the thoughts of a character without the need for a narrator. Perry Nodelman observes that although picturebooks may have a first-person narrator on the verbal level, they usually show an outside perspective in the pictures (Nodelman, 1991). While this "puts very high demands on the reader" (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 125), a consistent first-person perspective in a picturebook would mean that recipients never see the narrator, which also "would present considerable difficulties" for an "unsophisticated reader" (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 125) such as a small child.

It becomes clear at this point, that the narrator is a topic of debate when it comes to multimodal texts, although Thon (2019) points to the fact that the narrator is also a contested concept in narratology that examines only written text. The classical view that follows Genette in arguing that fictional texts generally have a narrator who speaks (a standpoint that has itself been contested), can become problematic when regarding texts that do not solely rely on verbal text as their

semiotic mode. Thon argues that the question of the narrator becomes less of a problem when narrators are understood as characters that are represented in a more or less explicit manner in the texts, since this concept of the narrator can more easily be transferred to multimodal texts (Thon, 2019, p. 81). Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) argue that "we should probably treat the words as *primarily* conveying the narrative voice, and pictures as *primarily* conveying the point of view" (p. 117, emphases in the original). They write furthermore:

> The four most prominent features of the narrator's presence in the text are the description of setting, the description of character, the summary of the events, and the comments on events, or the characters' actions. While the two last elements are predominantly verbal in picturebooks, the first two […] can be both verbal and visual, agreeing or counterpointing in various ways. (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 118)

When it comes to the capabilities of verbal text and pictures, which are also reflected in the four central aspects regarding narrators, the general observation is that verbal text is best suited to relating to temporal, causal, and emotional aspects of the narrative, while pictures are best suited to showing spatial relations or optical characteristics of different kinds. There are some interesting overlaps in these areas when it comes to how verbal text and pictures interact to form an entity. On the one hand, a picture can use different strategies to indicate a flow of time or movement or to show the emotions of characters. Most often, pictures in comics use a certain set of lines – e.g., speed lines to indicate fast movement or drops of sweat on a face to indicate that a character might be nervous. Scott McCloud (1993) calls these lines symbolic, referring to the extensive understanding of them (p. 128). A strategy often used to indicate movement that can be found in both picturebooks and comics is simultaneous succession: "a sequence of images, most often a figure, depicting moments that are disjunctive in time but perceived as belonging together, in an unequivocal order" (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 140). This strategy originates in medieval art, where it is often used to describe different episodes from the life of a saint. Other graphic codes of movement such as motion lines are also used in picturebooks but are borrowed from comics.

On the other hand, the graphic design of letters, as well as the positioning of verbal text in a picture or panel, and possibly even their coloring, convey meaning and can give words a pictorial quality. By lettering certain words in

certain styles, comics often try to capture the acoustic quality of words, indicating that a character might, for example, be yelling or whispering. What can be observed here is the attempt to charge words (which are usually regarded to be best suited to describing emotions) with the visual directness of pictures that are often less specific, but can inspire strong emotional responses (McCloud, 1993, pp. 134–135). These strategies are linked to the fact that comics and picturebooks contain less verbal text than, for instance, novels, so charging words with the more direct emotional response evoked by pictures might be a means of 'saying more with fewer words'.

Thus, the combination of the two semiotic modes used in picturebooks and comics leads to unique constructions of meaning that have an impact on how readers construct storyworlds. What has become clear is that the narrative strategies employed in the media that are the focus of my project are elaborate and demand active readers who assemble the various verbal and visual cues to construct a storyworld and make meaning of the narratives they engage with.

3.3.4 Econarratological perspectives on the storyworld

Connecting the formal analysis of narratives with the examination of the cognitive processes involved in reading (fictional) narratives in different media allows for a detailed analysis with a textual focus that offers enriching perspectives on how narratives operate and how they build a storyworld to which recipients relocate. Although Herman's concept is not altogether new – as there had been earlier concepts of textual worlds and other related notions of the environment that a narrative builds up, in which characters interact with each other and with their surroundings – his coinage of the term 'storyworld' makes it possible to bring together and expand earlier models. Furthermore, his concept integrates several earlier approaches into one model, which is also fundamental to Erin James's approach to *econarratology*. Here, the narratological implications of the concept of the storyworld are combined with a thematic focus on the environment in narratives. This approach to literary texts is still very new. In her book *The Storyworld Accord* from 2015, James points to the importance and omnipresence of the environment as an underlying and fundamental part of the storyworld in narratives, yet prior to the publication of her work, the two realms had not seriously been brought together. As she points out, the formal analysis of texts had not been a central interest of scholars occupied with ecocriticism and the ecocritical

dimension had not been a concern of narratology scholars (James, 2015, p. 4). Yet, the two areas can enrich each other, since the portrayal of environments can not only widen our understandings of other cultures but can also show alternative imaginable environments, as James argues. By focusing narratological investigations on the storyworld, in the sense of the environments that are constructed in a narrative and on the way in which this is done, aspects of narratives that tend to be overlooked in narratology are brought into focus. This leads to a change in how different features of a narrative are weighted when it comes to their formal examination. By foregrounding the importance of the environments in which characters act and events happen, an understanding of other cultures and the capacity to imagine different environments might be increased, which is what James foregrounds as one of the achievements of narratives, reflected in her "primary argument […] that reading narratives can help bridge imaginative gaps" (James, 2015, p. 3).

James uses Herman's concept of the storyworld to offer narratological analyses of narrative texts that focus on environmental questions in various ways. By foregrounding the formal strategies used in a narrative to convey a certain storyworld, it is possible to connect those strategies with the question of how certain narrated environments may influence readers' experience of a text and have an impact on their experience of the world. Earlier theories about the worldbuilding power of narratives often use metaphors such as transportation to grasp how readers mentally relocate in the process of reading and argue that after finishing reading, "[t]he traveler [that is, the reader – B. H.] returns to the world of origin, somewhat changed by the journey", as, for example, Richard J. Gerrig (1993, pp. 10–11) writes is one of the key elements connected to a reader's transportation into a textual world. This underlines not only the aforementioned "world-creating power of narrative" (Herman, 2002, p. 14) that is fundamental for Herman, but also the social impact narratives can have. One of the central premises of econarratology is "that stories about the environment significantly influence experiences of that environment, and vice versa" (James & Morel, 2020, p. 1). In addition, econarratology asks "how readers emotionally and cognitively engage with such representations and how the process of encountering different environments in narratives might affect real-world attitudes and behaviors of those readers" (James & Morel, 2020, pp. 1–2). The investigation of this "world-creating power of narrative" (Herman, 2002, p. 14) at this point becomes quite literal, both with relation to the *building* of a world while reading and with relation to the world

that is *built* both in the mind and possibly even in the actual world through meeting a text. This makes clear that econarratology is among the theoretical and methodological approaches that take into account an extratextual dimension when it comes to discussing the meaning of narratives in the world and in different societies.

The concept of the storyworld in this context functions as an anchoring point for a narratological analysis that foregrounds the importance of environmental aspects and how they are used as strategies in narrative texts. By focusing on this concept with a special awareness of ecocritical theories, the storyworld gains an additional dimension that underlines Herman's accentuation of the importance of context regarding narratology as well. While earlier narratological research mostly focused on temporal aspects of narrative representations, the storyworld takes the context more into account. In econarratology, the "world" in 'storyworld' gains the dimension of the actual spatial and environmental qualities that exist in a narrative. It accentuates the surroundings that readers, or viewers, or listeners create through engaging with a narrative, while paying attention to narrative structures. To quote James:

> Econarratology embraces the key concerns of each of its parent discourses – it maintains an interest in studying the relationship between literature and the physical environment, but does so with sensitivity to the literary structures and devices that we use to communicate representations of the physical environment to each other via narratives. It also highlights the potential that narratives stand to make to readers' understandings of what it is like for people in different spaces and times to live in their ecological homes by foregrounding the comparative nature of narrative immersion. (James, 2015, p. 23)

Together with spatiality, the aspects of embodiment and mental simulation play an important role in econarratology, since the attention paid to cognitive processes in the reading experience emphasizes the experientiality involved in reading narratives. With that, potential changes in perspective or even behavior that might be inspired in the recipients come to the fore. Alexa Weik von Mossner (2017b) investigates how feelings are evoked in recipients of narratives on a cognitive level, and writes "that reading a literary text (or watching a film) is a form of mental simulation that involves readers' bodies much like their engagement with

the real world" (p. 556). Pointing to empirical evidence, she explains the neurological side of this simulation process: "Embodied simulation involves the mirror neurons in our brains and its most fascinating aspect for literary scholars is that we also map the movements, sensations, and emotions of fictional people onto our own bodies" (p. 556). This underlines the connection between literary narratives and the real world that is important to econarratology, but also illustrates how postclassical narratological approaches combine narratology with other sciences and cross-fertilize each other. Here, the notion of narrative empathy also comes into play, as readers mentally construct emotions, which become real insofar as those emotions evoked by fictional narratives are experienced as real on a physical level. When it comes to the power of narratives to evoke emotions in readers and lead to changes in opinions and behaviors, Martha Nussbaum (1997) is a common reference point for scholars who argue for the social merits of literature. Nussbaum positions literature as central for the education of citizens and argues that

> [n]arrative art has the power to make us see the lives of the different with more than a casual tourist's interest – with involvement and sympathetic understanding, with an anger at our society's refusals of visibility. We come to see how circumstances shape the lives of those who share with us some general goals and projects; and we see that circumstances shape not only people's possibilities for action, but also their aspirations and desires, hopes and fears. (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 88)

Nussbaum stresses that a liberal literary education is vital for citizens to develop and strengthen empathetic behavior and an empathetic attitude toward others. However, there is debate about the extent to which narrative empathy can actually bridge social and cultural differences. Suzanne Keen (2007) stays cautious on this subject. She argues that "[i]f narrative fiction has the capacity to alter readers' characters for the good, it may also possess darker powers" (p. 25). Furthermore, she underlines that "like all fleeting emotions, it [empathy – B. H.] passes, and relatively few altruistic actions […] can be securely linked in a causal chain to our empathetic feelings" (p. 35). In a recorded lecture, Keen even points to the potential dangers connected with empathy, since we might tend to empathize more easily or more strongly with those who are like us, which in turn could increase

exclusionary feelings toward other social groups (Abraham Kuyper Center, Nov. 17, 2017, 12:44).

Aware of the debate about the role and potential of empathy in literary narratives, Erin James emphasizes somewhat more generally "the potential for narratives to open up channels of communication about different ways of imagining and experiencing various environments" (James, 2015, p. 212), which is a more central interest for her. This again shows the status that narratives have in an econarratological perspective as constructs that have an influence outside of the fictional realm. This becomes especially apparent when regarding narratives and their meaning for nations and national identity. In a section on that topic, James uses Ben Okri's trilogy *The Famished Road* (1991, 1993, 1998) about Nigeria as an example of not only the power of narratives when it comes to national identity, but also the power that narratives can have over each other, and writes that "those who have the power to tell narratives also have the power to construct worlds and the corresponding ideas of history, culture, geography, atmosphere, and truth that inform the environmental and social conditions of those world's inhabitants" (James, 2015, p. 175). This is another dimension of the real-world impact narratives can have.

James (2015) foregrounds the cognitive processes involved in opening up the aforementioned "channels of communication", and thus connects econarratology clearly to cognitive narratology, which also connects back to the concept of storyworlds. I discussed some of the characteristics of cognitive narratology in subsection 3.3.2 and emphasized the role that mental simulation plays in this context above. In addition to these concepts, James names 'Theory of Mind' (also called 'folk psychology' or 'mindreading') as another theory that tries to explain how humans mentally transport themselves into storyworlds. Unlike mental simulation, Theory of Mind takes a theory-based approach and argues that humans have "a rough-and-ready evolved folk psychology that we use to represent to ourselves the beliefs, intentions, and desires of other people" (Vermeule, 2010, p. 35). In other words, this theory suggests that humans have developed mindreading skills throughout their evolution, which make it possible to navigate social life by deducing others' intentions and beliefs based on the behavior they display.

A controversy in econarratology, which James points to very clearly, "is that readings of storyworlds demand that we embrace the anthropomorphic in ecocritical works, especially the role of the human imagination in the perception

of the environment" (James, 2015, p. 30). While various strands of ecocriticism criticize anthropo*centrism*, econarratology stresses the subjective experience involved in creating a storyworld in readers' minds, which does in a way center humans – or at least the importance of human imagination. This is connected to the argument that it is humans who invent narratives, and that narratives are a human creation – indeed, a creation that defines human identity. This equates not so much with anthropocentrism as with anthropomorphism, which James (2015) describes as "a narrative expedient that stresses the horizontal relationship between humans and their nonhuman counterparts" (p. 32). Thus, she argues that anthropomorphism is a helpful tool that aids humans in understanding the nonhuman world through imagination and narrative. Econarratology as a research tool comes in at this point and allows scholars to investigate what happens when we focus on the environment in a narrative and what it tells readers about the world that is mentally modelled, about the characters and the society they meet through their engagement with a narrative. While anthropomorphism is seen as helping us understand the nonhuman world, econarratology enables that understanding to be examined and highlights how narrative structures create an understanding of the nonhuman world in the first place, as well as how different strategies of representation lead to different conceptions of the world – both in- and outside narratives. Applying this approach to multimodal texts leads to a widening of perspective regarding narrative structures, since the focus now lies not only on verbal cues, but also on visual cues, which is especially important when it comes to the representation of environments in picturebooks and comics. Taking into account both verbal and visual narrative strategies reveals the ways in which environments play a role in multimodal narratives in two respects, and how verbal and visual strategies work together to create versatile approaches to and understandings of environments in narratives. Furthermore, econarratology allows us to focus our attention on how other parts of narratives (characters, events, actions, etc.) might be influenced by the environment where they act or take place, and vice versa.

While *The Storyworld Accord* focuses on postcolonial literary texts – albeit already with the notion that econarratology is in no way restricted to this kind of narrative – econarratological research has since also developed in other directions. James and Morel (2020) identify three main trends, namely "the representation of the nonhuman in narratives" (p. 6), "the development of econarratology in discussions of narrative ethics" (p. 8), and "the development of econarratology in

a turn toward cognitive science" (p. 10). Some of the directions in which econarratology is moving are especially interesting when it comes to multimodal narratives, since the media of picturebooks and comics can present environments, as well as human and nonhuman consciousnesses, in ways written texts cannot – that is, they can use pictures to convey perspectives and environments in an emotionally very direct way, which in a written narrative would have to be mediated by a narrator in a more indirect way. This can also "challenge basic anthropomorphic assumptions of narrativity itself as a representation of experiencing *human* consciousness" (James & Morel, 2020, p. 15, emphasis in the original). In this way, the econarratological investigation of multimodal texts offers a new and differentiated perspective of the anthropomorphism that, as mentioned earlier, constitutes a premise of econarratology, in that the human imagination occupies a central role in this strand of research.

While there is some research on narratology and comics, an *eco*narratological focus on multimodal narratives has not yet gained ground in academia, which is something that my project seeks to change. With new directions starting to be explored in econarratology, picturebooks and comics provide a further testing ground for econarratological endeavors that can especially help to understand how (young) readers make sense of the world around them and how different textual environments build understanding of, and perspectives on, alternative takes on what the world inside and outside of narratives can look like.

This notion is related to concepts of citizenship and practices that are connected to it. How readers imagine or construct storyworlds, and especially how the relationships between characters and their surroundings are represented, is a central factor in readers' immersion into narratives. Some fundamental axes in these versatile relationships can be described as civic in a basic sense of the word. And these relationships also apply to children, who, according to the law, are not yet full citizens, given their young age. The discussion of different concepts of environmental citizenship in chapter 2 showed that the various models place more or less importance on different aspects of it. Using econarratology, it is possible to examine how aspects of different notions of environmental citizenship are reflected on a structural level in narrative text. This thesis also seeks to investigate and understand how aesthetic form, on a verbal as well as a visual level, and content influence each other and how these influences relate to notions of environmental citizenship. Citizenship models in narratives are an interesting subject to study from an econarratological perspective, both concerning the

environmental topics that econarratology focuses on, and the ecological dimension Herman (2002) ascribes to the storyworld. Citizenship in narratives confronts readers with certain imaginations of society and the relationships between people in a given social context – environmental citizenship accentuates the environmental context in which these relationships unfold and also looks at the relationships between people and their environments, and presents different imaginations of what these relationships do, could, or should look like. Examining these relationships under the topic of "environmental citizenship" involves paying attention to these social factors that go beyond a narrative itself and foregrounding the way that these relationships have an important political dimension. Thus, the social dimension that is generally important to econarratology also occupies a central place in the narrower context of my project. Environmental citizenship as a model in narratives brings together how we imagine our surroundings on a structural level, in terms of both society and human and nonhuman nature. The representation of different and changing imaginations in particular is a highly relevant topic from an econarratological standpoint, since taking this perspective makes it possible to observe how those changes and differences operate on structural narrative levels.

In this section, I have presented the main analytical approach I take in my project and discussed different aspects of the storyworld and their connection to narratological questions. I have shown the specific relevance of narratology in a multimodal context, since the objects of my study are picturebooks and comics, which are both multimodal texts. The discussion of the storyworld as an important concept led into my laying out my reasoning for adopting econarratology as my main method for the analyses of the picturebooks and comics in Part II. The attention that is paid to the different relational dimensions of the environment makes this a method that will allow me to examine aspects of environmental citizenship in multimodal narratives for young readers a fruitful way that will help to further understand the imagining of different environments.

3.4 Education for sustainable development

Education for sustainable development comes into my project as an important context when considering questions of how narrative texts communicate with young readers, especially in cases where those texts were written with educational goals in mind.

Today, environmental topics are usually integrated into school curricula under the banner of 'sustainable development'. The term was defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) in 1987 as follows: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 2009, p. 43). Benito Cao (2015) attributes the broad acceptance of the term "not least […] to its lack of specificity" (p. 21), which is something that can be scrutinized. It is also unclear whether the term focuses more strongly on sustainability or on development, and different interpretations of it prioritize each part differently (Cao, 2015, p. 21). Greg Garrard (2007) also emphasizes that "[t]he concept of sustainability […] itself [is] extremely contentious and subject to many interpretations ranging from radical ecological transformation to 'business as usual'" (p. 374). There is also some debate about an internal contradiction in the term 'sustainable development' itself, especially regarding questions of sustainability and economic growth. While some economists argue that economic growth within the boundaries of ecosystems can be possible, others argue that economic growth and sustainability are two mutually exclusive ideas (Kvamme & Sæther, 2019, p. 25). It becomes evident that 'sustainable development' is a conflict-ridden concept. It does, however, feature prominently in global politics of today. A problem that is connected to the wide and manifold use of this unspecific term is that it also is susceptible to being used for greenwashing in different economic areas (Hennig, 2021c, pp. 18–19).

In school curricula, sustainable development has in the past mostly played a role in school subjects such as the natural sciences, geography, and to some degree the social sciences, while the field is still relatively new in school subjects concerned with language and literature (Kvamme & Sæther, 2019, p. 31). This also parallels the comparably late turn toward environmental approaches to literature in the humanities. While sustainable development has had a strong presence in other fields for decades, there still seems to be a need to justify the inclusion of environmental topics in literary studies and related school subjects. Arguments

regarding the merits of integrating questions of the environment and sustainable development into literary education mostly concentrate on a factor that Erin James (2015) also names as a central aspect of econarratology: readers' immersion into narrative storyworlds and the various cognitive and affective consequences of this. For example, Anne Kari Rødnes (2019) argues that literary narratives "offer a space for both immersion and distancing" (p. 63, my translation). Like many other scholars, she refers to the works of Martha Nussbaum, among others, regarding the moral and educational merits of literary texts.

The topic of sustainable development gained more ground in the national curriculum in Norway in 2020 through a nationwide reform called "Kunnskapsløftet 2020" (KL20) or "fagfornyelsen", which translates as "subject renovation". The reform introduced three interdisciplinary topics to its core curriculum, namely (1) health and life skills, (2) democracy and citizenship, and (3) sustainable development. However, the reform states that "[t]he goals for what the pupils should learn in the topics are stated in the competence goals for the individual subjects where this is relevant" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a), and while the topic 'sustainable development' has not become part of the curricula for all school subjects (English and Foreign Languages are notable examples), it has been integrated into the curriculum for Norwegian, thus acknowledging to some degree that language and literature do play a role with regard to sustainable development (Hennig, 2021c, p. 17).

Looking at what KL20 states about sustainable development for the subject of Norwegian, the focus is threefold.

> The interdisciplinary topic sustainable development is about pupils developing knowledge concerning how texts represent nature, the environment, and living conditions, locally and globally. By encountering the subject's textual diversity, reading critically, and participating in dialogues, pupils can develop the ability to understand and handle conflicts of opinion and interests that can emerge when a society moves in a more sustainable direction. The subject of Norwegian contributes to raising pupils' consciousness and equipping them to take action and affect society through language. (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b, my translation)

The main competences pupils should learn here are to understand how textual representation of the environment works, how to handle different opinions about

the environment, and to become more aware of the role language plays in society in an environmental context. Thus, the curriculum puts an emphasis on communication, honing pupils' abilities to understand and discuss different viewpoints on sustainable development. This is also an aspect that Erin James (2015) mentions as one of the possibilities narratives open up that are central to econarratology.

There are, of course, also several potential complications connected to the inclusion of sustainable development as a topic in the subject of Norwegian, some of which are connected to the political and ideological character of the topic, which can easily impact education. Reinhard Hennig (2021c) discusses one of these complications, namely some conflicts that can arise in connection with ecocritical teaching that clearly favors ecocentrism over anthropocentrism. This is an assumption that points back to early environmental ethics. Hennig points to an internal contradiction regarding an ecocentric standpoint, namely that ascribing value to all ecosystems would also include ascribing value to human-made ecosystems, which is something that ecocentric strands often do not do. Furthermore, he argues that anthropocentrism does not necessarily entail negative consequences for the environment, mainly because human survival depends upon the environment. He underlines this argument by pointing to the fact that many definitions of both 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' are anthropocentric in nature, including the definition by the Brundtland Commission and the UN's sustainability goals (Hennig, 2021c, pp. 29–30). All of this makes sustainable development both a difficult and an important topic to tackle in an educational context.

In an article entitled "Transactive Teaching in a Time of Climate Crisis", Säfström and Östman (2020, p. 989) point to some central potential problems that might arise "*when the climate crisis becomes a 'sustainability issue' to be taught in schools*" (emphasis in the original). They argue that reducing nature to a 'thing' pupils acquire scientific knowledge about, instrumentalizing students when it comes to questions of education, and the connected issue of normativity in education "*objectifies both students and nature, which makes an adequate response to the crisis obsolete*" (Säfström & Östman, 2020, p. 989, emphasis in the original). As an alternative, they propose a transactive approach to teaching that focuses on pupils as participants in the world and on the importance of "consummatory experiences and the aesthetic values (of likes and dislikes) that accompany such experiences" (Säfström & Östman, 2020, p. 998). In a somewhat

similar vein, Greg Garrard (2021) highlights the importance of accepting different viewpoints when it comes to education about climate change and related issues as a way to "yield better solutions to problems" (p. 62). This is not least because one's opinions and beliefs in matters of climate change are shaped not only by scientific facts, but to a large degree also by factors that constitute our identity as individuals, as well as our political affiliation, as Garrard writes. What becomes clear in both articles is the existence of a fundamental underlying tension in current school education between a wish to teach children a certain set of norms through standardized forms of learning on the one hand, and teaching children how to form their own opinions in a complex world and scrutinize society's norms on the other.

Education for sustainable development also touches upon questions of didactics and didactic practices. While this aspect of it is highly important, I will not discuss it extensively in this thesis because my focus lies more on examining how the picturebooks and comics I have selected depict different storyworlds and take up aspects of environmental citizenship in these storyworlds. In connection with this, I discuss potential problematic and positive sides of the didactic aspects of the texts themselves and how they try to engage and influence readers in directions that are depicted as desirable in the narratives.

Theoretical works that consider more practical aspects of teaching literature in the context of sustainable development highlight literary conversations as a useful tool in the classroom. Rødnes (2019), for example, emphasizes that pupils can learn to understand the perspectives of others through conversations about texts they have read in class. She underlines, however, that a sole focus on aspects of affect might impede a reflective engagement with the text, especially if characters or motives in the text are experienced as unfamiliar. She therefore argues that investigating and analyzing texts in different ways – for example, with a focus on the use of terminology – can supplement literary conversations (Rødnes, 2019, pp. 64–65). While I do not examine practical examples for these kinds of educational strategies in my project, I do discuss textual strategies that invite readers to engage with narratives and that express certain educational goals throughout my analyses. Although this obscures the practical dimension of education for sustainable development and of the subject of Norwegian in general, it gives me the opportunity to examine the didactic dimensions that are inherent in the narratives I analyze. Since much research on education for sustainable development in the context of the subject of Norwegian (and other language teaching) focuses more strongly on didactic practices and the more concrete

questions of teaching in the classroom, I consider my more theoretical focus to be enriching to the field because it adds another perspective that can supplement the practical side of teaching literature from an environmental perspective.

4 Methods

In this chapter, I will present my text selection and the analytical model I formulated as a guideline for the literary analyses that form the second part of this thesis. In the analytical model, I will gather the threads from the previous chapters and set out how I will make use of the theories I discussed and combine them into a tripartite model I will use to examine my text corpus.

4.1 Text selection

For my project, I have selected seven texts: four picturebooks and three comics, for readers from ages three to eighteen, from four different decades between the 1970s and the 2010s. The picturebooks and comics I analyze in my project all address questions of the relationship between humans and the environment as a more or less central part of the stories they tell. This means that the texts contain certain values they frame as desirable or 'right' in opposition to behavior they present as less desirable or 'wrong'. Therefore, the texts also have more or less distinctly articulated strategies to convey a message to readers. A common feature of the stories I analyze is that they are morally engaged narratives that wish to teach their readers something, although the degree to which the texts formulate this engagement and their communication with readers varies. The texts also show a different degree of openness toward readers. While some of the narratives contain more and bigger gaps for readers to fill, others are characterized by a stronger guidance of readers and a lower degree of what David Herman (2002) calls "gappiness" (p. 67). Furthermore, my text selection consists solely of narratives that can be attributed to the field of popular literature. This kind of literature has not yet been a focus of ecocritical research in children's literature, which is why I focus my project on texts that are accessible for the majority of people. Considering that I examine questions that are relevant for everyday life, I want to contribute to research about literature that is read in everyday life by examining texts that are potentially read in classrooms or at home, for example.

The text selection is meant to give an overview of how multimodal narratives communicate with different reading audiences regarding aspects of environmental citizenship in various decades. Furthermore, the historical variety of the texts provides an insight into changes in the representation of environmental issues over time.

The texts I analyze will be arranged in chronological order by date of publication. This also means that picturebooks and comics will not be analyzed in separate groups. The oldest text in the selection is Tor Åge Bringsværd's picturebook *Det Blå Folket og Karamellfabrikken* [*The Blue People and the Caramel Factory*], published in 1974. It is the first text in a trilogy about the titular Blue People, who are characters that act as environmental agents. All three texts in the trilogy contain elements of social criticism and are characterized by the politicized debate around environmental and social issues that gained importance during the 1970s. In the story included here, the Blue People wake up a sleeping town to make the inhabitants aware of the severe air pollution coming from the local caramel factory. The townspeople ultimately have to decide whether they want to close the factory to have clean air again, or whether they want to keep producing caramels.

My second analysis concerns *Blekkulf blir miljødetektiv* [*Blekkulf Becomes an Environmental Detective*] by Bente Roestad from 1990. In this picturebook, Blekkulf and his friends discover a waste pipe that is polluting the ocean. In order to solve the problem, they decide to write a letter to the humans onshore to make them aware of the pollution. The character of Blekkulf has become an important figure when it comes to teaching children about the environment and environmental protection. His influence on popular culture in Norway was distinct throughout the 1990s, as many children were members of 'Blekkulf's Environmental Detectives' ['Blekkulf's miljødetektiver'], an environmental organization for children. *Blekkulf* is an example of a narrative that has quite distinct educational goals, and that has at the same time shaped children's culture in Norway. In addition to the environmental organization, *Blekkulf* has been adapted into several TV series. While it would be interesting to examine the character's transmedial influence more closely, I will concentrate on the aforementioned picturebook in this thesis. Discussing the character's portrayal in different media would complicate my econarratological approach that focuses on specific kinds of multimodal texts and would ultimately go beyond the scope of my project.

The third analysis will focus on a selection of comic strips from a special issue of the comic strip series *Nemi* from 2010 by Lise Myhre. *Nemi* is read by both young adult and adult readers, which makes the texts analyzed in this chapter arguably the ones with the most adult reading audience. The comic series is about the character Nemi Montoya, a young goth woman concerned about, among other

things, the environment and animal welfare. Here, I examine five comic strips from the series that have an environmental theme and discuss different aspects of environmental citizenship. The comic strips are characterized by a satirical undertone and punch lines that play with reader expectations.

Following this will be a discussion of selection of *Donald Duck* comics written between 2009 and 2011. Here, my focus lies on three stories by the Norwegian author Terje Nordberg and the Norwegian cartoonist Arild Midthun. Donald Duck's exceptional position in Norwegian popular culture in the second half of the 20th century makes it worthwhile to include stories about this notoriously angry duck in my project, even though the character is originally American. The three stories I discuss all take place in and around Duckburg and feature Donald himself as the main character. They take up aspects that are typical of Donald, such as his bad luck, his lack of control, and his temper, and situate them in an environmental context.

Nina lærer gjenbruk [*Nina Learns Recycling*] by Antonella Durante, published in 2018, constitutes the fifth analysis chapter, focusing on a picturebook about a girl who learns to be creative in recycling different objects, together with her parents. The picturebook is characterized by a positive atmosphere and a quite direct address to readers by means of the narrative voice. This analysis is followed by the discussion of a special issue of the comic series *The Urban Legend* by Josef Tzegai Yohannes from 2019 that was specifically created to be used in the classroom. The series takes much inspiration from the superhero genre, and while the setting of the series in general is the fictional Capital City, the special issue takes place in the Amazon rainforest and discusses illegal deforestation as its main topic. This text is an example of a narrative with a lower degree of 'gappiness', which becomes clear on both the visual and the verbal level.

The analyses conclude with a discussion of Kari Stai's picturebook *Jakob og Neikob: Stormen* [*Yesper and Noper: The Storm*] from 2019. Marketed for children aged three to six, *The Storm* is arguably directed at the youngest reading audience I consider in my project. It tells the story of two best friends, Yesper and Noper, who learn how to behave in a more environmentally friendly way and consume less to protect the environment. With its characteristic visual style, the picturebook is an example of a narrative in which the environment is presented as an active participant in the storyworld readers engage with. *The Storm* is the only narrative in my text selection that has been examined from an ecocritical perspective since its publication. Several articles have discussed the picturebook

in terms of its presentation of environmental issues, and some articles have also looked at aspects of environmental citizenship in particular. I will come back to this in the chapter that analyzes Stai's picturebook.

With a few exceptions, all the texts were originally written in Norwegian. In most cases, translations of quotations from the texts, where they are necessary, are my own. This is mostly due to the fact that some of the texts have not been published in English. All of my own translations are accompanied by a footnote referencing the Norwegian text. Translations that are not my own are marked accordingly in the footnotes. This applies to three of the seven texts, namely *The Blue People*, *The Urban Legend*, and *The Storm*. In the case of *Donald Duck*, I was unable to obtain the English versions of the three stories I analyze, which is why the translations in that chapter are also my own, even though the stories were originally written in English and then translated into Norwegian. Four of the works (*Blekkulf*, *Nina Learns Recycling*, *The Urban Legend*, and *The Storm*) do not contain page numbers. To facilitate textual orientation when I cite from the narratives, I provide my own numbering for these works, where the first numbered page is always the first page of the narrative. For the unnumbered picturebooks, I refer to double-spreads (abbreviated as "ds.") and specify recto and verso where necessary. For quotations from comics, I refer to the particular panel on the page where the quoted passage can be found.

My text selection, although certainly not exhaustive, is meant to show different approaches to aspects of environmental citizenship both in different times and for different reading audiences. Furthermore, the texts show various understandings of aspects of environmental citizenship, which will be discussed in a comparative chapter toward the end of my work. Even though the picturebooks and comics I analyze display aspects of environmental citizenship, I do not argue that the authors consciously use any concepts of environmental citizenship as formulated by theorists. My argument is rather that these narratives contain different aspects of environmental citizenship that can be analyzed and discussed from the perspective of a more refined understanding of different approaches to the concept of environmental citizenship.

4.2 Analytical model

The preceding discussion of theories relevant for my work allows me to derive an analytical model for my examination of picturebooks and comics in Part II. A

three-part structure for the textual analyses, which all my literary analyses will follow, arises from the theoretical discussion. The overarching topics are (1) the storyworld, (2) environmental citizenship, and (3) educating environmental citizens. The structure of the analyses will thus progress from more form-oriented to more content-oriented points and back again, which is why the discussion of aspects of the narratives most strongly related to the storyworld will be discussed first. In my analyses, I am interested in examining the aesthetic and formal side of the narratives, as well as aspects of content in relation to environmental questions, and more specifically questions of environmental citizenship.

The structure of my analyses is also meant to foreground environmental questions in general before examining individual aspects of environmental citizenship in more detail. Each of the three areas of examination leads to several guiding questions for my analyses, which I outline in this section. The analysis model I present here is coarsely woven, which allows me to adjust it to suit the various texts where needed without losing the general structure. Furthermore, dividing the analyses into three parts makes it possible for me to give each of the areas of examination my undivided attention, while it also presents a structure for the comparative discussion in chapter 12. The three areas also build on each other. Examining aspects of environmental citizenship includes paying attention to how this aspect is narrated *in the storyworld*. Discussing the interplay between reader and text in this context builds on the insights gained in the analyses of both the storyworld and aspects of environmental citizenship. Covering these aspects first allows me to draw on the findings when it comes to questions concerning how the texts convey knowledge and communicate with readers. In order to analyze this, it is important to have an understanding both of how the texts work with regard to their storyworlds and of how they narrate aspects of environmental citizenship. The focal points in the different sections of the analytical model that I present here are to be understood as guiding questions. A summary at the end of each analysis, as well as the comparative chapter, will further connect the three areas that are examined throughout the analyses.

4.2.1 The storyworld

The discussion of the storyworld above has shown that this concept touches upon both story- and discourse-related aspects of narratives. As I established in subsection 3.3.2, in my understanding, the concept of the storyworld spans the

entities, locations, and events contained in a narrative on the one hand, as well as the cognitive processes of their mental construction on the other hand. The storyworld is also a central aspect of econarratology, which is why I foreground it as part of my analyses. Central to the concept of the storyworld is that it is a mental model that is constructed during the reading process. It is, to use Iser's term, an 'interaction' between text and reader. Considering that the storyworld as a concept focuses strongly on how readers construct these mental models, its cognitive dimension is a central characteristic. The strategies and principles Herman refers to in his work are fundamental here, such as Ryan's 'principle of minimal departure', the notion of deictic shifts, or scripts. The notion of 'gaps', central to Iser's work, is also important when it comes to how readers construct storyworlds, because Iser's concept and the approaches from cognitive narratology complement each other.

Analyzing the storyworld with a focus on econarratology means, furthermore, that my examinations of plot, experiencing entities, and location pay special attention to how the environment is presented, and how it partakes in and shapes the narrative. Central questions I discuss in this part of the analyses are:

- What are the characteristics of the storyworld, including locations, experiencing entities/characters, and plot?
- Which visual and verbal narrative strategies are employed and how do they invite readers to construct storyworlds on a cognitive level by means of 'gaps', the 'principle of minimal departure', deictic shifts, scripts, 'make-believe', and related concepts and strategies?
- How are media-specific narrative strategies of picturebooks and comics used to shape the storyworld and influence how readers are invited to construct it?
- What role does the environment play as part of the storyworld on a verbal and visual level?

These aspects touch upon storyworld-specific aspects of the narratives under examination, as well as more general formal ones, because the two areas are tightly connected to each other. Starting with this area provides the most suitable entry into the analyses, since it includes an overview of the narrative and its

characteristics, before moving on to questions of environmental citizenship more specifically.

4.2.2 Environmental citizenship

After having established how the narratives operate and how the characters interact with each other and with their environment, I will look at how aspects of environmental citizenship feature in the text. Here, my analysis will not necessarily proceed according to the narrative's chronological order, but rather will focus on relevant questions of environmental citizenship in a thematically logical order. The main questions I pose about the texts in this area are:

- How are rights and duties addressed in the narrative?
- What is the dominant conception of citizenship in the text?
- What is the relevant community defined in the text (local/national/global)?
- Where does the text locate environmental responsibility?

Of course, the portrayal of aspects of environmental citizenship is partly connected to the storyworld in general, which is why some of the insights from the first sections of the analyses will be taken up again in these second sections, where this is necessary and conducive to my argumentation. Separating environmental citizenship questions from other questions does, however, allow me to examine these aspects in as focused and isolated a way as possible. At this point, it is important to reiterate that I do not suggest that the authors whose works I analyze consciously work with any of the theories I discussed throughout chapter 2. Rather, I argue that aspects of environmental citizenship are present in the narratives and that examining them in light of theories of environmental citizenship offers a refined discussion about how literary texts narrate the different relationships between humans (or experiencing entities in general) and their environment. This point also highlights the exchange between environmental citizenship and storyworld. Environmental citizenship forms part of the narratives' storyworlds, and in the context of my project, it is a central part of it. But how aspects of environmental citizenship are narrated is always connected to the broader question of how the storyworld itself is presented and modelled in readers' minds.

4.2.3 Educating environmental citizens

The discussions of the storyworld and aspects of environmental citizenship lay the groundwork for the third and final step in my analyses, which focuses on how the narratives engage readers in aspects of environmental citizenship. Here, I will pay close attention to how the narratives communicate with their readers and how they convey educational and moral messages. This part of my analysis builds on questions related to both the storyworlds and to citizenship, and therefore also brings together central points from the preceding examination. I will draw on findings from both of the previous sections when addressing these questions. The main aspects I focus on in this part are:

- Who is the target audience and how does the narrative address them?
- Who are readers invited to identify with?
- How does the narrative involve readers, on both the narrative and the paratextual levels?
- Which visual and verbal strategies and stylistic devices are used to educate readers on environmental topics?
- What educational and didactic potential lies in the narrative structures?
- Does the narrative call for environmental action and, if so, does it use direct or indirect strategies to do so?

Regarding the topic of educating environmental citizens, I expect to find some fundamental differences between picturebooks and comics, especially when it comes to questions of the how the narratives communicate with readers. The double audience consisting of adult and child readers is very important when it comes to picturebooks, which also has a bearing on all the other questions posed in this section. For comics, communication with readers works differently, both because comics generally work less with a double audience and because they are usually designed for single readers reading in silence instead of reading out loud. How educational and didactic potential are manifested in the narratives is therefore contingent on the respective medium in which they are presented. This part of the analyses distinguishes itself from the first two in a fundamental way. While the storyworld and environmental citizenship focus on a neutral analysis of how the narratives cue readers to construct storyworlds and which aspects of environmental citizenship they discuss in which ways, this third part includes a critical discussion

of the narratives' didactic dimensions and how they approach and influence readers.

This model will guide my analyses in Part II. The questions I pose in each of the analytical areas are formulated relatively openly. This allows me to adjust the focus in each analytical chapter to the specificities of each narrative without losing the ability to compare them. The structure of the analyses will also be the basis for my comparative discussion toward the end of my project. While I understand my analytical model to be helpful for my literary analyses, it also has certain limitations. Because I divide every analysis into three different parts, issues that concern all three areas of an analysis at the same time can sometimes appear as slightly fragmented. In some cases, this restrains me from carving out certain points regarding certain narratives. However, given my focus on formal aspects of the texts, as well as questions of environmental citizenship, my analyses would appear somewhat unstructured without a guiding form. The merits that come with my analysis model far outweigh its limitations and disadvantages, which is why I accept them as a necessary part of my project.

Part II – Literary Analyses

5 Tor Åge Bringsværd and Thore Hansen: *Det Blå Folket*

Tor Åge Bringsværd is one of the most prolific writers of children's and young adult literature in Norway (Birkeland, Risa, & Vold, 2018, p. 272). Since the late 1960s, he has written numerous fictional texts that are often characterized by their fantastical elements. Together with writer John Bing, Bringsværd introduced the term 'fabelprosa' ['fable prose'] in 1972 as an alternative term for science fiction, but also as a more general label for fantastic writing that encompasses various genres. Bringsværd and Bing (1972) state that fable prose "takes fantasy as a starting point to highlight fundamental circumstances in our own everyday life"[11] (p. 11, my translation). This points to the social criticism prevalent in both authors' works, which is often connected to elements of estrangement or alienation ['underliggjøring'], leading to a deautomatizing effect in the stories: by incorporating fantastic characters and elements, authors can open up narratives to offer perspectives that might scrutinize or even challenge established opinions. Øystein Rottem (2009) refers to Bringsværd's works from the 1970s as "social satires in an ironic, humorous, and burlesque form that is far away from the social realism of the time"[12] (my translation), and points to the author's political stance as a socialist and anarchist. Birkeland, Risa, et al. (2018, p. 269) point to the "fundamental dualism in his [Bringsværd's] view on the relationship humans have to nature"[13] (my translation) and highlight the ecological perspectives he took up in his works, something that is especially true for the narrative I analyze in this chapter.

Bringsværd's *Det Blå Folket* [*The Blue People*], illustrated by Thore Hansen, is a picturebook trilogy (Birkeland, Risa, et al., 2018, p. 268) with three independent stories about the crew of the sailing ship the *Happy Air Frog*[14] that

[11] [Norwegian original: «… fabelprosa […] bruker et fantastisk utgangspunkt for å belyse vesentlige forhold i vår egen hverdag.» (Bringsværd & Bing, 1972, p. 11).]

[12] [Norwegian original: «…samfunnssatire i en ironisk, humoristisk og burlesk form som står fjernt fra tidens sosialrealisme» (Rottem, 2009).]

[13] [Norwegian original: « … grunnleggjande dualisme i synet på forholdet mennesket har til naturen» (Birkeland, Risa, et al., 2018, p. 269).]

[14] The translation of the name of the sailing ship the Happy Air Frog [Luftens Glade Frosk] and of the captain's name, Poor Augusta [FattigeAugusta] are taken from the English translation of Bringsværd (1979), published as *The Blue People and the Lonesome Animal* in *Scandinavian Review* in 1979. However,

sails through the sky. In the first story, *Det Blå Folket og Karamellfabrikken* [*The Blue People and the Caramel Factory*, hereafter *The Caramel Factory*] from 1974, the titular crew, under the command of captain Poor Augusta, discovers a large dirty cloud through which they have to bore a tunnel in order for the sun to reach the Earth. They find out that the cloud originates from a caramel factory. As they explore the town where the factory is located, the crew learns that its residents are conducting their daily business in their sleep and are therefore unaware of the air pollution coming from the factory. The crew decides to wake up the whole town. As the inhabitants become aware of the pollution, they go to the factory and start a discussion about whether they should close it in order to have clean air, or whether they should accept the air pollution in order to have caramels. Wondering what the people will decide, the Blue People set sail again and leave, because the townsfolk must make their own decision.

The Caramel Factory has 29 numbered pages, with 15 pages featuring verbal text and a picture, 13 pages featuring only a picture or a picture that includes speech balloons, and one page that displays a song. For the most part, on the pages that display both verbal text and pictures, the pictures are round and positioned either above or in the middle of the verbal text. The pages displaying only a picture are mostly the recto, while the text is mostly positioned on the verso. The pictures in the story draw inspiration from psychedelic art and the international hippie movement of the 1970s, underlining the social criticism present in the verbal text (Birkeland, Risa, et al., 2018, p. 269). Some of the psychedelic inspiration can be seen in the design of the crew's garments and of other objects like housetops and the smoke from the factory: the small circular and rectangular patterns that disrupt the flat coloring used for some features of the pictures are vaguely reminiscent of the "intense, swirling patterns" (Parfitt, 2003) featured, for example, in the work of the Australian psychedelic artist Martin Sharp.

5.1 A storyworld marked by contrasts

"If you're lying on your back in the grass on a clear summer day, and all of a sudden, a small cloud comes up … well, it's not quite certain that it is a small cloud. Take a good look. Doesn't it move faster than a cloud usually does? Do you

since the story analyzed here has not been translated, all other translations in this chapter are my own, except for two quotes that will be marked accordingly. These are instances where the text in *The Blue People and the Lonesome Animal* and *The Caramel Factory* are identical.

have a spyglass?" (Bringsværd, 1999, p.5).[15] *The Caramel Factory* engages readers actively right from the beginning by addressing them directly and inviting them to perform a deictic shift to immerse themselves into the storyworld by connecting it to the real world. The first page of the story also displays central characteristics of the relationship between verbal text and pictures that will be consistent for much of the narrative. Above the cited passage, which is the very first paragraph in *The Caramel Factory*, is a round picture that shows a landscape with blue sky and something that looks like a small cloud. Already, the unusual use of colors that persists throughout the whole picturebook can be observed here. While sky and cloud are colored realistically in blue and white, the two hills that are shown are striped in yellow and purple, reminiscent of acres, with a tree-like shape in yellow, green, and purple rising at the point where the two hills meet. The picture's frame has a white inner and outer edge, with its center checkered in black and white and some decorative circular shapes in the lower half of the frame. This is the only picture with an elaborate frame in the whole story, and in the context of the text's question about whether the reader has a spyglass, it can be interpreted as the view through the lens of a spyglass that opens a pathway into the story, and thus as a visual representation of the deictic shift readers are invited to perform. The picture combines both more and less realistic features (mostly concerning the use of colors), which is a defining style for the artwork throughout the whole story. This also exemplifies a visual realization of the authors' use of 'fable prose'.

At the beginning of the story, readers learn that the Blue People and their sailing ship the *Happy Air Frog* function as guardians of the sky who "have always been there" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 6),[16] taking care of the clouds, rainfall, and wind. As the story presents it, "[t]hey push aside fog and clouds so that people can see how beautiful the stars are" (Bringsværd, 1979, p. 23),[17] which puts them in humanity's service without humans noticing. I will return to this point later. The use of vivid colors and the combination of different drawing techniques in *The Caramel Factory* underlines the Blue People's foreignness as characters that are not regular human beings and that do not belong to the actual world in the same

[15] [Norwegian original: «Hvis du ligger på ryggen i gresset en klar sommerdag, og det plutselig kommer en liten sky … så er det ikke helt sikkert at det er en liten sky. Se nøye på den. Går den ikke fortere enn skyer pleier å gjøre? Har du en kikkert?» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 5).]

[16] [Norwegian original: «De har alltid vært der.» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 6).]

[17] [Norwegian original: «De trekker tåke og skyer til side, så menneskene skal få se hvor vakre stjernene er.» translation from Bringsværd (1979, p. 23).]

way humans do. They are rather an external and allegorical force that guards the environment and raises awareness of environmental issues. Their strangeness can also be seen in the crew's extravagant appearance that seems to be inspired by the hippie culture from the time in which the picturebook was written. The narrative also breaks with conventions in that the crew's captain is a woman, "Fattige Augusta" ["Poor Augusta"], whose name implies some of the *Blue People*'s general social and capitalist criticism. Furthermore, a female captain breaks with traditional gender roles in two ways. Not only might it be seen as unconventional that a woman is the leader of the group, but she is also the captain of a sailing ship, which is a humorous inversion of the centuries-old superstition that women on ships were bad luck. After the captain, the whole crew is introduced, and the corresponding pictures give an optical impression of its members, who are "the same color as the sea and the sky" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 6)[18] because their skin is blue.

The plot starts to unfold after readers learn that one of the Blue People's tasks is to bore tunnels through clouds, so that the sun can reach the Earth. "One Friday in November, they were occupied with boring a tunnel through an extra thick and dirty cloud" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 10).[19] Above the verbal text, a round picture shows the sailing ship next to a big black cloud that hides the sun and is the focus of the page. The recto shows how the crew works their way through the cloud with a gigantic spade (fig. 5.1). This picture shows the unusual clothing of the crew members, which strongly alludes to the hippie fashion of the 1970s. The Blue People wear big shirts, or possibly short dresses, that have different patterns on, which partly resemble animal prints and partly have the same decorative circular shapes as the picture frame on the first page. The background of the picture is orange and seems to be a photograph of a surface painted with several layers of orange and yellow that creates an almost organic structure, most probably representing the sun. The cloud consists of differently sized chunks that are finely striped in black and white, which creates a pulsating effect when one looks at the picture. This generates a stark contrast to the organic background and emphasizes that the cloud's material is unnatural. The picture also uses speech balloons and thus breaks with the story's main narrative style. The interplay between verbal text

[18] [Norwegian original: «De har same farve som hav og himmel.» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 6).]

[19] [Norwegian original: «En fredag I november holdt de på å grave en tunnel gjennom en ekstra tykk og skitten sky.» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 10).]

and picture is especially close here. Readers are drawn into the cloud and experience direct interaction between the characters without a narrative voice to mediate who says what.

The situation invites readers to shift their position further into the storyworld and immerse themselves more directly into the crew's work. Without verbal markers, the picture thus facilitates a second deictic shift for readers. The speech balloons visualize the crew's confusion and irritation over the cloud, since it is only partly possible to identify which crew member says what. Furthermore, while the verbal text in most of the speech balloons expresses irritation, the speech balloon that can be clearly assigned to Pontus acts as a verbal page-turner. His question, "What can that be?" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 11),[20] invites readers to turn the page to find out that the cloud is in fact smoke coming out of a factory's chimney. The round picture of the factory displayed on the next page has what Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) call an "expanding" function, meaning that the "verbal narrative depends on [the] visual narrative" (p. 12) because while the picture shows a factory, the verbal text does not explain this to readers on the same page. The factory is called "the culprit" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 12)[21] by Poor Augusta, which is clearly a negative framing. The crew decides to investigate the situation and approaches the city where the factory is located. During their investigation, the Blue People keep quiet so nobody will notice them. This underlines their role as an external force that is unknown to humans and that, furthermore, wants to remain unknown. As Poor Augusta and some of the crew members enter the city, the respective picture gives an impression of the town, which is not described in detail in the verbal text. Verbal text and picture focus on different things here. The verbal text, displayed on the verso, concentrates mostly on the plot and on the characters' confusion over the amount of air pollution in the city and the fact that nobody seems to care about it. Poor Augusta hears a strange sound, and the narrative leads readers to discover that the people in the town seem to be snoring. The corresponding picture on the recto shows the deserted town with the sailing ship anchoring on a roof antenna. What stands out here is that the color of the sky is not completely realistic, but painted in orange-yellow and red-pink colors, and the row of differently shaped houses that is drawn in front of the sky contrasts starkly with it. Poor Augusta, Alfredo, Felix, and Pontus are shown in

[20] [Norwegian original: «Hva kan det være?» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 11).]

[21] [Norwegian original: «den skyldige» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 12).]

the foreground with surprised facial expressions. The ground in this picture is white, without any structure, allowing the characters to stand out quite strongly and directing the reader's focus to them. The role of the picture here also corresponds to an argument that Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) make about pictures' "unlimited possibilities of conveying literally an 'omnipresent' perspective by giving a panoramic view of the setting" (p. 119).

The storyworld in *The Caramel Factory* revolves around the contrast between the Blue People and the people who live in the sleeping town. In the first picture that shows the town's inhabitants, readers see a mass of similar-looking people in suits, who are asleep, as indicated by the speech balloons over their heads that each contains a "z" (one balloon contains five: "zzzzz"). It turns out that the whole town is in fact sleepwalking, and the verbal text concludes that "[b]ecause everyone was asleep, nobody could wake them up. Nobody could tell them they were sleeping. And since they did not know that they were asleep, they continued just like before. They believed they were awake! The whole town was sleepwalking!" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 19).[22] Even the "serious people" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 19)[23] in the town hall sleep while having discussions. The crew continues to go through the town in the direction of the factory, where the smoke gets thicker and thicker. The factory is presented as a bleak place: the ground here is not white, but completely black, which again makes the blue-skinned characters in their colorful garments stand out quite strongly. The factory itself is drawn in black and white, with three chimneys of different heights dominating the building, emitting thick black clouds that are filled out with small circular shapes. Next to the factory is a black, weathered tree that seems to lean away from the building, which underlines the fact that the factory is not a place for anything natural – in fact, the only "nature" depicted here, in form of the tree, seems to be trying to get away from the factory. In this picture, the sky is white, making the factory stand out even more. This is also a stark contrast to the first pictures in the narrative, in which the sky is richly colored, underlining how the Blue People have left their regular field of activity and entered the human world. Furthermore, the lack of details in this and other pictures in the town invites readers to enrich what is depicted with their knowledge of the actual world by means of

[22] [Norwegian original: «Fordi alle sov, var det ingen som kunne vekke dem. Ingen kunne fortelle dem at de sov. Og siden de ikke visste at de sov, fortsatte de akkurat som før. De trodde de var våkne! Hele byen gikk i søvne!» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 19).]

[23] [Norwegian original: «alvorlige mennesker» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 19).]

the ‘principle of minimal departure’ (Ryan, 1991), thus mentally creating a storyworld shaped by the individual. The group discovers that they are actually standing in front of a caramel factory, and they realize that this creates a conflict: “‘If only it had been another screw factory or a factory that makes old car tires,’ said Pontus. ‘People won’t like it if we take caramels away from them.’” (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 20).[24] Poor Augusta, however, objects that the people will die of smoke poisoning if nothing is done about the factory. The group discusses the dilemma created by the fact that, one the one hand, the factory pollutes the air, but that on the other hand, people want to have caramels. After they tell the rest of the crew about the problem in the town, Sebastian, the cook, has an idea about what they need to do. Here, text and picture are again placed together on the verso, and readers can see the moment in which Sebastian has his idea. He lifts up his left index finger and a speech balloon with a candle comes out of his chef’s hat. This is a humorous play on the commonly known lightbulb that signals characters having a good idea in comics. It also underlines again that the Blue People are not regular modern people, and it hints at the book’s overall criticism of technology (Birkeland, Risa, et al., 2018, p. 269).

Sebastian goes on to build “the world’s largest (and strangest) alarm clock” (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 22),[25] consisting of cooking pots attached to a wooden pile, a flaring horn, and a hammer attached to a lath with a rope tied to the end. Before the alarm clock can be set off, however, Felix and Pontus go back to the town hall, paint the faces of the members of the town council black with soot from the factory smoke, and put pocket mirrors on the table. Here, the picturebook uses a verbal page-turner again: “And so, Sebastian could set off his alarm clock …” (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 24).[26] The three dots invite readers both to imagine what might happen and to turn the page to find out.

After waking up, the members of the town council find out that their faces have been blackened, and that even the laundry and the windows are black. They wonder whether they might be sick and eventually decide that something needs to be done, so they march out of the town hall. In the meantime, the Blue People have emptied the bags full of the dirt they collected from the clouds over the factory

[24] [Norwegian original: ««Hadde det enda vært en skruefabrikk eller en fabrikk som lager gamle bildekk,» sa Pontus. «Folk vil ikke like at vi tar karamellene fra dem.»» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 20).]

[25] [Norwegian original: «verdens største (og merkeligste) vekkerklokke» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 22).]

[26] [Norwegian original: «Og så kunne Sebastian ringe med vekkerklokken sin …» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 24).]

owner's house, so he is sitting on a huge pile of dirt as the members of the town council come to his house (fig. 5.2). What is interesting about the corresponding picture on the recto is that the dirt is entirely made out of fingerprints in black, blue, and red. This contrasts not only with the white background and the man drawn sitting on top of the pile of dirt, but it strongly marks the dirt as anthropogenic. It is literally a human fingerprint, which for contemporary readers strongly evokes the ecological footprint, a concept only established in 1990 (Global Footprint Network, 2021), more than a decade after *The Caramel Factory* was published. The town council members start a discussion with the factory owner about the problem of the factory polluting the whole town. However, the factory owner defends himself against the mayor's accusations and says that all he did was make caramels for everyone and that people told him his caramels were the best. This makes the mayor contemplative because he realizes that the town is facing an important choice between clean air and caramels. The corresponding picture illustrates the discussion between the factory owner and the town council, and the differing opinions of the interlocutors are mirrored on the double-spread: The mayor and the other members of the town council are shown on the verso, while the factory and its owner are displayed on the recto, the factory standing between the town council and the factory owner. The blank line underneath the mayor's question of whether the citizens want to have clean air or not indicates the narrative shift that takes place as the text returns to the Blue People, who now sail away from the town again. Thus, readers do not get to find out what the townspeople decide and how they want to deal with their environmental and social problems. As Poor Augusta says, "'We have woken them up. They know what is in the way. How it will go on, they must decide themselves'" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 30).[27] This again underlines that the Blue People do not get involved with what people do, although they might, as in this story, act as a (invisible) moral voice that initiates action.

The environment in the storyworld of *The Caramel Factory* is depicted quite minimally as the plot progresses. On the visual level, there is a big difference between the first pictures, in which the coloring of the sky especially is very vibrant, and the last pictures, where the sky is simply white. This also broadly corresponds with the part of the story that is more focused on the Blue People

[27] [Norwegian original: ««Vi har vekket dem. De skjønner hva som er i veien. Hvordan det videre skal gå, det får de bestemme selv»» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 30).]

themselves and the part that takes place in the sleeping town. The verbal text also reflects this bisection. The narrative style in the first part of the story is more poetic than in the second part. The first paragraph combines fantastic elements with realistic ones, and the text that introduces the Blue People is even written in verse. However, as the characters enter the town, the narrative style becomes more prosaic and matter-of-fact, which mirrors the appearance of the townspeople. This might well be interpreted as suggesting that the Blue People see the world differently, since they, as guardians of the sky, have a different perspective on the world, which is mirrored in the differing depiction of the sky. The more colorful and varied visual style of the earlier pictures further foregrounds the Blue People's otherworldliness, also expressed through the style of their garments. Apart from the sky, however, the only other environmental features that receive much attention in the picturebook's visual language are clouds, especially the dirty cloud caused by the factory's air pollution. Otherwise, the focus lies more strongly on the characters and the buildings in the town, especially the factory.

A central contrast that is being shown on the visual level is the appearance of the Blue People as opposed to that of the town's citizens. While the Blue People wear colorful clothes that reflect the hippie culture of the 1970s, the townspeople are dressed in similar-colored suits and, what is more, all the male citizens generally look very similar, which gives the impression of an anonymous mass of people who lack any individuality. This is further enhanced by their sleepwalking, which functions as a metaphor for the townspeople's thoughtlessness and the fact that they have stopped noticing what is happening around them. The storyworld of *The Caramel Factory* blends the fantastical with the realistic and invites readers to combine the two right at the beginning of the story by establishing a direct connection between the actual world and the storyworld.

The picturebook's visual strategies emphasize the Blue People's otherness, which becomes especially apparent when comparing the first part of the story with the second part. In the first part, the pictures display a variety of different drawing and painting styles that are combined together and blend more fantastical elements with more realistic ones. On a formal level, verbal text and pictures have distinctly assigned positions for the most part. This gives the story a clear structure even though the visual level especially can appear messy or confusing, given its colorfulness as well as the combination of different elements and styles within individual pictures. The interplay between words and pictures becomes especially interesting when it comes to the environmentally focused parts of the story – for

example, when the picture shows the factory for the first time while the verbal text only talks about "the culprit". The picturebook also incorporates some visual strategies commonly used in comics, especially speech balloons, which also leads to some variation in the interplay between words and pictures.

5.2 Environmental citizenship: A conflict of interest

The narrative takes up aspects of environmental citizenship on the level of the characters, as well as on the level of the diegesis. Aspects of environmental citizenship are most openly addressed during the last part of the plot, after the townspeople have been woken up by Sebastian's alarm clock. However, environmental questions that relate to aspects of citizenship are taken up earlier in the story as well. The Blue People's tasks can be defined as duties to the global community, and the story shows that their duties have two sides. On the one hand, they monitor and guard the clouds and ensure, for example, that the sun reaches the Earth, which is described as something they do for humans: "They make sure that it rains on the farmers' fields. […] They push aside fog and clouds so that people can see how beautiful the stars are" (Bringsværd, 1979, p. 23),[28] depicting the Blue People, as mentioned earlier, as in humanity's service. On the other hand, the story shows that the Blue People also monitor the condition of the environment and look into environmental problems when they arise. Given the focus on the Blue People's service to human societies, they can be read as a group that generally acts in accordance with republican notions of citizenship. Although they display a large degree of individuality compared to the conformity of the townspeople, they act as one group and work together for the common good, which in this case means clean air. Their motivation is not driven by individual goals, but first by the will to find the source of the pollution and later by the thought that the people must be troubled by the dirty air. These are the reasons why they start to investigate the situation and discover that the whole town is asleep. A global view of the environment and its well-being motivates the Blue People's actions. While the Blue People act in a way that reflects a generally republican mindset, they also display liberal thoughts and motivations, and they do not promote one specific view regarding the right way to live. In fact, they do not interfere at all in the

[28] [Norwegian original: «De passer på at det regner på bondens åker. […] De trekker tåke og skyer til side, så menneskene skal få se hvor vakre stjernene er», translation from Bringsværd (1979, p. 23).]

political debate that starts between the town council and the factory owner after the crew has woken up the town. Quite the contrary – since they are not part of the political community in question, they withdraw completely from the discussion. When exploring the town and waking the people up, they even take great care to remain undiscovered. The town is depicted as a community influenced by neoliberal tendencies. As mentioned before, the town's being asleep is a metaphor for the fact that they have stopped noticing what is happening around them. The people's perpetuation of 'business as usual' is taken up visually in their outward conformity. This also expresses a criticism of the lack of attention paid to environmental issues in the actual world, which is typical of the overall social criticism contained in the picturebook trilogy more generally. It also illustrates that things may have gone in an environmentally questionable direction without society as a whole noticing it because it is a gradual development over time.

The stark contrast between the Blue People's appearance and that of the townspeople visualizes the opposing worldviews that are present in the story and gives expression to the social criticism contained in *The Caramel Factory*. The Blue People embody a more liberal worldview that is at the same time connected to a somewhat romanticized view of a less modern world. They represent an alternative culture, as opposed to the business-driven townspeople, and their activism has a deautomatizing effect, meaning that as the Blue People wake up the town, they disrupt the monotony that has defined life in the town up until the point when the alarm clock goes off. This also links taking action for the environment and for conservation to alternative cultures in general. The romanticized view of a less modern world that the Blue People display is also taken up by the fact that the crew sails on an out-of-time sailing ship that is more reminiscent of fairy tales than a contemporary context, in contrast to the world of the townspeople.

The debate that is started toward the end of the story is clearly marked as political, and both characters who speak do so in their respective functions as mayor and factory owner, not as private individuals. The last part of the story generally evokes the language of citizenship quite directly since the mayor addresses the members of the town council as "citizens" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 28).[29] The final discussion also centers around a conflict of interest between citizens and the economy, which takes up the dynamic that Benito Cao (2015) identifies with relation to 'consumer citizenship'. The town council, with the

[29] [Norwegian original: «medborgere» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 28).]

mayor as its spokesperson, speaks up in favor of limiting the factory's environmental impact. What the mayor also expresses in the discussion with the factory owner is the insight that people must give up something they like (in this case, caramels) to reach an important common goal (in this case clean air). The narrative does, however, also address the social dimension of the discussion between the town council and the factory owner, because the latter points to the fact that if the factory is closed, all of the employees will lose their jobs. The factory owner furthermore makes the point that the people also benefit from the factory because it produces something they like. It turns out that the problem that town council and factory owner discuss has multiple layers that cannot be separated from each other. This is also a problem that Felix addresses already as he, together with Poor Augusta, Alfredo, and Pontus, stands in front of the factory: "We can't just completely stop the factory, can we?" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 20),[30] he says, to which Poor Augusta replies that the people in the town must decide what to do on their own.

This also shows that the different characters within the group of the Blue People have different thoughts about what should be done in the situation at hand. While Felix is unsure about whether closing the factory is possible, Poor Augusta says that this is not the Blue People's decision to make (although in her personal opinion, clean air is clearly more important than caramels). In this sense, *The Caramel Factory* does not evoke concrete models of environmental citizenship very specifically, but it rather raises awareness of basic problems that pervade contemporary socioeconomic structures and defines those problems as citizenship-related topics. Structurally, this recalls Michel Serres (2011) and Bruno Latour (2004), who argue that some of our fundamental conceptions of concepts like 'nature' and 'community' must be redefined, but who do not discuss concrete examples of what a world thus changed would look like. The debate at the end of *The Caramel Factory* does, however, pose the fundamental question of what significance or status the environment has and whether people are willing to make a collective sacrifice for this goal or not. It is striking that, although the town bears some characteristics of a community that is influenced by neoliberalism, the discussion that takes place toward the end is conducted on a communal level, not an individual level. The question is not what individuals should do to limit the environmental harms caused by the factory that produces consumer goods for the

[30] [Norwegian original: «Vi kan vel ikke bare rett og slett stoppe fabrikken?» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 20).]

people. Instead, it is clearly a collective decision that needs to be made. Yet this decision is presented as an either/or decision with no middle ground. As the story portrays it, clean air and caramels cannot be reconciled with each other.

Both the community and the conflict are portrayed as local, since *The Caramel Factory* tells the story of the Blue People and the environmental problems of one town. At the same time, however, the town is depicted in such a way that it could also be any other town (it has, for example, no name), such that the situation that is narrated here is transferable for readers and implicitly invites them to draw connections between the situation in *The Caramel Factory* and their own experiences from the actual world. The visual presentation of the town also contributes to this transferability. Because the pictures show almost nothing of the localities that is not important to the main narrative or that does not work as backdrop, there are more 'gaps' for readers to fill subconsciously. At the same time, this has the effect of directing readers' focus to the political sphere, even while the central problem is environmental, and only the very concrete topic of air pollution caused by the factory is depicted in verbal text and pictures. The action needed is not taken up directly since the Blue People leave the town before readers learn what the result of the debate between the mayor and the factory owner is. It seems, however, that the action needed here is on the same transferable local scale as the conflict, since the whole situation happens in the same place, the same town. Thus, the town council can be read allegorically as a global polis that must find a common solution for the worldwide problem of pollution.

Here, responsibility for taking action is located on a somewhat superordinate level because the change that needs to happen is not addressed with respect to individuals, but it is the town council and the factory owner who must find a solution. In other words, it is the civic community and the economy that have to talk to each other. Indeed, individual citizens do not appear in the town throughout the whole story. The only time readers see the population is on a double-spread where everyone is presented as part of a homogenous group of people who are asleep. Later, when the mayor talks, he does so as mayor, not as a private person. At the same time, since the narrative addresses readers in a more direct way toward the end, it also invites them to continue the discussion started in *The Caramel Factory* and, possibly, to transfer it to their actual world.

Generally speaking, the picturebook takes up aspects of environmental citizenship in a differentiated way. It takes up both liberal and more republican perspectives on the situation the townspeople must handle in the story. Even

though the Blue People's moral standpoint becomes quite clear, the narrative does not present some aspects of environmental citizenship as more desirable than others, and it is the local community that eventually has to decide which political direction they want to go in. On the level of the narrative, aspects of environmental citizenship are reflected in the opposing worldviews of the townspeople on the one hand and the Blue People as a group that has an environmental responsibility on the other, which is also taken up in the verbal and visual style of the narrative. On the character level, environmental citizenship is mostly addressed through the characters' different points of view. This concerns both the townspeople, where the factory owner and the town council have different opinions on the matter at hand, and the Blue People, where the different crew members do not all have the same opinion on the question of what the townspeople should decide, giving readers an insight into different opinions on the problem of air pollution in the narrative.

5.3 Identifying with the Blue People

In *The Caramel Factory*, the focus of the story lies mostly on raising awareness about air pollution, and the ending invites readers quite directly to form their own opinion, as Felix and Poor Augusta pose open questions while sailing away from the town. The picturebook uses the narrative 'you' in a circular way here, because the story starts and ends by addressing readers more or less directly. The story's open ending implicitly asks readers to think about and possibly discuss what the townspeople will decide – or should decide. The placing of the open questions toward the end also has the effect of allowing the structure to summarize the main conflict, by emphasizing the dilemma implicit in the fact that in order to have clean air, people will have to make a collective sacrifice. At the same time, it also underlines the fact that clean air is understood as a precondition for life.

A distinct visual strategy to call readers' attention to the central problematic in *The Caramel Factory* is the opposing presentation of the Blue People and the townspeople. This also visualizes how the townspeople have been infiltrated by an industrialized lifestyle to the point that they no longer pay attention to what is happening around them, which includes what is happening to their environment. While the townspeople are depicted as a sleepwalking, apathetic, and uniform group, the Blue People are the complete opposite in that they are a group of clearly distinguishable individuals who take action when they see something that is not

right – in this case, the big black cloud or the fact that the whole town is sleepwalking. As mentioned in the previous sections, the moral standpoint of the Blue People is presented as positive and desirable, and the text invites readers to identify with them. Interestingly, though, the Blue People are, just like the townspeople, adults – the picturebook does not, in fact, feature any children. With that being said, the Blue People display more playful attitudes and behaviors, something that can be read as childlike. For example, they dress in a less business-like and serious way, and they paint the townspeople's faces with dirt. Both aspects also illustrate that the Blue People offer a different perspective on the situation. Since they are not part of the collective of the town, they are presented as a group that has the agency to wake the town up and make the people see the problem, but they are at the same time not in a position to bring about change. Their power is limited to raising awareness. Transferred to child readers, who are invited to identify with the Blue People, this can be read as a perspective that although one might not be in a position of power, one can still initiate change. On the other hand, this might also suggest that action is limited to making others aware of problems and does not involve trying to counteract problems in a more direct way. In any case, the invitation to identify with the group that is presented as an alternative culture also invites readers to think in less conventional ways and look at established structures from a different angle.

Another aspect that strengthens readers' identification with the Blue People is the song at the end of *The Caramel Factory*, which is mentioned in the beginning of the story as a song that the parrot Alfredo can sing. After the title of the song is mentioned, a footnote even tells readers that "the song is on page 33" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 6),[31] which emphasizes the invitation to read or even sing the song. The song is displayed on the recto with a picture of the sailing ship in the sky as seen from the back on the verso. The inverted positioning of verbal text and picture here is interesting and lets the song stand apart from the rest of the story. It is also unusual that the color of the sky in this picture is blue. The only other picture where the sky has a blue color is the very first picture. This connects the story's beginning and ending visually. Also, while the cloud that is in fact the *Happy Air Frog* is approaching readers in the first picture, the sailing ship is sailing away in the last picture, which further marks the fact that the story has now ended, and the Blue People's mission is complete. The song itself contains both sheet music and lyrics.

[31] [Norwegian original: «Sangen står på side 33» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 6).]

The lyrics describe the Blue People and emphasize that they are active everywhere, since "our ship is as fast as the eagle and can fly us [the Blue People – B. H.] wherever we want" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 33).[32] Interestingly, the sailing ship is as fast as an eagle, while Poor Augusta is, as mentioned, as strong as an eagle. Apart from telling readers more about the Blue People, the song also draws connections between the Blue People and the actual world readers inhabit. Three times, the lyrics mention "you" and connect where the Blue People are and what they do directly to the readers: "In the daytime, you can see us as a blueberry in the blue / We have starlight on at night-time when you sleep / […] And maybe we fly just over the house where you live!" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 33).[33] Like the first paragraph of the story, the concluding song links the Blue People, who are entities of the storyworld they inhabit, to the actual world readers inhabit.

To address the didactic potential of *The Caramel Factory*, it is worthwhile recalling that Bringsværd characterizes his writing as 'fable prose', which means that a story comes in disguise and wants to tell us something about ourselves and our life, and using fantastic elements helps to give a new perspective on things (Bringsværd & Bing, 1972, p. 10). This new perspective is embodied by the Blue People, who are so different from the townspeople.

The story's ending is, as mentioned, open, but it suggests an environmental optimism vis-à-vis the idea that when people see pollution and pay attention to it, they will no longer ignore it. The Blue People's discussion also suggests a clear preference for clean air over caramels despite the open question Felix asks the other crew members and seemingly also readers. It is Sebastian's stance especially that makes clear which direction the story presents as preferable: "**The Happy Air Frog** rose higher and higher. 'What do you think they will choose?' said Felix. 'Clean air,' said Sebastian. 'I am almost sure of that.' Pontus sighed. 'But you know, caramels are terribly good.' 'Nothing is **that** good!' said Sebastian" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 31, emphases in the original).[34] In other words, although Felix is not sure what people will choose and Pontus points out that caramels are

[32] [Norwegian original: «Vårt skip er rask som ørnen og kan fly oss hvor vi vil» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 33).]

[33] [Norwegian original: «Om dagen kan du se oss som et blåbær i det blå / Om natten når du sover, har vi stjernelykter på / […] Og kanskje flyr vi nettopp over huset der du bor!» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 33).]

[34] [Norwegian original: «**Luftens glade frosk** steg høyere og høyere. «Hva tror dere de velger?» sa Felix. «Frisk luft,» sa Sebastian. «Det er jeg nesten sikker på.» Pontus sukket. «Men du vet, karameller er skrekkelig godt!» «Ingenting er **så** godt!» sa Sebastian.» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 31, emphasis in the original).]

"terribly good", the cook very firmly states that nothing is as good as clean air. Since his statement is followed by a blank line, it underlines that there is nothing to be discussed with respect to Sebastian's position.

This also casts a new light on the factory owner's objection that closing the factory will mean that his employees will lose their jobs. This problem is minimized not only because the mayor replies to it by saying "We will take one problem at a time" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 30),[35] but also because the clean air is in the end clearly prioritized over the danger of unemployment. So even though the story acknowledges this dimension, it also presents it as less important than solving the problem of air pollution. The use of caramels as the object that has to be given up for clean air makes the structural problem that the town faces more understandable for child readers, because it can be assumed that children might be able to immerse themselves more easily in the conflict of giving up candy for clean air, than if the factory had produced something that was more distinctly targeted at adults than children.

The narrative does not call for environmental action in a direct way but encourages readers to start thinking about environmental problems through the open questions the Blue People discuss at the ending. This can function as a way of starting a discussion about the situation with air pollution in *The Caramel Factory*, which might well be transferred to other situations where air pollution (or another form of pollution) is a problem. The open questions also invite discussion of the social problems that are connected to the issue at hand. As the factory owner makes clear, closing the factory would also lead to people losing their jobs. The story does, as mentioned, not discuss proposals for solutions. However, it also does not shy away from bringing the question of job loss into the complex topic of air pollution. Although the text does not give solutions, it makes the complexity of the problem apparent.

My analysis has shown that the picturebook is quite clear about what is represented as positive and negative. For example, when it is first introduced, the factory is called "the culprit", and it is not named as a factory directly in the verbal text. Instead, it is depicted in the corresponding picture. Readers are therefore invited to draw a connection between the factory and its role as an agent that is 'guilty', a word with clearly negative connotations. A similar form of moral guidance also happens in the concluding discussion, where Sebastian's standpoint

[35] [Norwegian original: «Vi får ta ett problem om gangen» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 30).]

is formally underpinned by the succeeding blank line. Also, Poor Augusta's earlier resolute exclamation that "[i]f they [the people – B. H.] die, they won't have any joy from caramels or anything else anymore!" (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 20)[36] makes the Blue People's overall moral standpoint very clear. Since they are presented as the positive force in the picturebook, this makes for very clear moral guidance directed at readers, even though it is never expressed as a direct request or demand. At the same time that the story is so clear about what is positive and negative, it also relativizes Felix's question of whether it was mean to empty all the dirt over the factory owner's house, since he might also have been asleep, just like the rest of the town (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 31). This highlights Poor Augusta's firm moral standpoint further and concludes the story at the same time, which has a similar underpinning effect as the blank line that follows Sebastian's point of view in the preceding paragraph.

Throughout the analysis, it has become clear that *The Caramel Factory* (like *The Blue People* in general) contains a distinct dimension of social criticism. The trilogy did in fact cause some public outrage when it was published because of its social critique of capitalism, which was considered to be dangerous for children (Birkeland, Risa, et al., 2018, p. 269), especially in the second story, *The Blue People and the Hurricane* from 1975. In the Norwegian newspaper Morgenbladet, critic Bodil Roald (1975) concluded his review with a warning for parents and censure directed at the publisher for having published the story in the first place, and at the Norwegian Cultural Fund for having supported the production of the picturebook. Interestingly, the same kind of reaction did not accompany the publication of *The Caramel Factory*, for which the reviews seem to be mostly positive, foregrounding the story's central message about environmental protection. While one critic stresses that the Blue People help humans to fight against pollution ("Det Blå Folket", 1974), another highlights that the picturebook's ending is a "good opportunity for children to think about the problem and make proposals for a solution" (Balke, 1974, p. 12, my translation).[37] For *The Caramel Factory*, the message that environmental protection is important seems to be appreciated by critics, and this seems to be connected to the open ending of the story. This gives the overall impression that questions of

[36] [Norwegian original: «Hvis de dør, har de ikke noen glede hverken av karameller eller noe annet lenger!» (Bringsværd, 1999, p. 20).]

[37] [Norwegian original: « … fin anledning for barna å tenke over problemet og komme med forslag til løsning.» (Balke, 1974, p. 12).]

environmental protection were seen as less “dangerous” for children than criticism of capitalism, which is interesting, since the two topics had in fact already been linked to each other in *The Caramel Factory*.

5.4 Conclusion

The Caramel Factory takes up aspects of environmental citizenship on a more general and, at the same time, transferable level. Instead of presenting more concrete ideas of what could or should be done when it comes to fighting pollution, the picturebook asks fundamental questions through the characters readers meet, without giving definitive answers. Rather, readers are addressed and encouraged to draw connections between the actual world and the storyworld from the beginning, and the ending can function to start conversations about the problems addressed throughout the picturebook, while at the same time inviting readers to again draw connections between the storyworld and the actual world. A central narrative strategy in the picturebook is the juxtaposition of the Blue People and the townspeople. With regard to the storyworld, this contrast shows itself on the visual, as well as the verbal, level of the narrative. While the parts that concern the Blue People are strongly characterized by fantastic elements and more poetic language, the parts of the story that take place in the town are written in more prosaic language, which is also reflected in the pictures.

When it comes to aspects of environmental citizenship, I have shown that the juxtaposition of the Blue People and the townspeople contrasts liberal individuals who act for the common good with a uniform group that has lost its connection to what is happening around them. The Blue People, who are clearly positively defined, act as an external force that guards the environment, and they take action when they discover that something pollutes the air for everyone. The story employs metaphors such as sleepwalking to convey messages about neglecting the environment and about social responsibility when it comes to acting on environmental problems. I have discussed how *The Caramel Factory* uses indirect strategies to educate and guide readers in terms of what the story presents as positive, while it is also outspoken about which moral opinions the Blue People in particular have. Since the Blue People are the protagonists of and, collectively, the positive entity in the picturebook, this makes the moral message of *The Caramel Factory* quite explicit even though the story has an open ending. Poor Augusta especially stands out as a character with a distinct opinion about what

should be done to solve the town's problem, even though she also underlines that it is the townspeople who have to decide how they want to proceed. This shows that the Blue People's moral attitude does not influence the story on an intradiegetic level, while this is different when it comes to the relationship between the narrative and its readers, who get to know much more about the Blue People and their opinions.

6 Bente Roestad and Ann Christin Strand: *Blekkulf blir miljødetektiv*

In the late 1980s, Bente Roestad created what is today the best-known environmental detective in Norway, an anthropomorphized cephalopod named Blekkulf. The first picturebook about him was published in 1989. Early on, Roestad cooperated with the Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature/Friends of the Earth Norway (Norges Naturvernforbund), thus closely connecting the fictional character to the actual world. Blekkulf can be described as a transmedial character, appearing in picturebooks, in several TV series, and in connection with an environmental organization for children established in 1989 under the name of 'Blekkulf's Environmental Detectives' ['Blekkulfs miljødetektiver'] (*Blekkulf's miljøhefte : 1-3 klasse : om søppel : Lærerveiledning*, 1991, unnumbered) until the organization changed its name to "Eco-agents" ['Miljøagentene'] in 2006 and stopped using the character of Blekkulf in its work (Christensen, 2006). In addition, several children's songs connected to Blekkulf have been published that have had considerable influence on children's culture in Norway. The character Blekkulf and the stories about him seek "to convey to children in a pedagogical way that environmental protection is important"[38] (Blekkulfklubben, 2020, my translation). Vebjørg Tingstad (2006) comments that the stories about Blekkulf are in general an example of a view of childhood in which children are "*made responsible* in relation to correcting the adults"[39] (p. 56, my translation, emphasis in the original) and sets this in relation to a widespread pattern in media in which a contrast is established between childhood and adult life. The aspect of correcting adults relates to a pattern visible in many stories about Blekkulf, where the natural world (personified through Blekkulf and his friends) often seeks an alliance with children to make them aware of environmental problems, and to invite them to speak up about those problems in front of adults. I will come back to this point later on.

Blekkulf blir miljødetektiv [*Blekkulf Becomes an Environmental Detective*, hereafter *Blekkulf*], originally published in 1990, is an early story about the titular Blekkulf, and his friends Rokkerolf (a skate) and Sprelline (a pink fish). They want to visit their friend Krabbelars (a crab) who lives elsewhere. On the way, they

[38] [Norwegian original: «formidle[r] på en pedagogisk måte for barn at miljøvern er viktig» (Blekkulfklubben, 2020).]

[39] [Norwegian original: «*ansvarliggjort* i forhold til å korrigere de voksne» (Blekkulfklubben, 2020).]

discover that a big waste pipe is polluting the ocean. The friends get caught in the algae, but Krabbelars is able to rescue them. Blekkulf decides to write a letter to human children on land to make them aware of the water pollution. He puts the letter into a bottle and places it by the seaside. After a short while, he receives an answer from a girl named Tove saying that she wants to help make people aware of the importance of environmental conservation.

Blekkulf has 12 unnumbered double-spreads with five pictures stretching over both pages and seven double-spreads with one picture on each side. On these seven double-spreads, one picture has a white background, and one is a full-page picture. The cover shows the titular Blekkulf with his friend Rokkerolf. Blekkulf is holding a flashlight, which casts light upon a message in a bottle that is sticking into the ground next to a small rock. In the background, the picture shows plants from under the sea, and several small bubbles indicate that the characters are under water. There is also a small turtle holding a magnifying glass and a shrimp holding another flashlight. The cone of light from the shrimp's flashlight illuminates the picturebook's title. The flashlights and the magnifying glass, as typical tools for investigation, build a visual connection to the title. The cone of light coming from Blekkulf's flashlight brings attention to a message in the bottle, which plays a key role later in the story. It also illuminates a small red banner in the lower right corner of the picture, which lets readers know that the book has been printed on "environmentally friendly paper". The cover picture also stretches over the back cover of the picturebook. Here, Sprelline and Krabbelars are featured, both holding magnifying glasses. In addition, a barrel is depicted in the center of the image, on the sea bed. This hints at the picturebook's environmental theme.

The book's endpapers feature the main character, who greets readers, introduces himself on the front endpapers, and says goodbye to readers on the back endpapers. The background for both endpapers features a color gradient going from yellow at the top to blue at the bottom, which echoes the colors of the beach and the sea. Both Blekkulf's greeting and his farewell are written in verse with an end rhyme. In the beginning, this establishes a connection between the main character and readers, and the rhyme structure makes it easy for readers to remember Blekkulf's name.

Overall, the picturebook displays a realistic cartoon style that anthropomorphizes the animal characters by giving them, for example, human-like faces and having them use accessories such as sunglasses, torches, and magnifying glasses in a human-like way. This is a central narrative strategy in the picturebook

that fosters readers' understanding of the characters' emotions and experiences. At the same time, the anthropomorphized animals are still recognizable as animals; the anthropomorphization is limited to their faces and the fact that they use tools like humans do. The verbal style is prosaic and dominated by direct speech in conversations between the characters. Rokkerolf is the only character with a distinct way of speaking, because he uses English words and phrases time and again when talking. The names of most of the characters in the picturebook are compounds of the species they belong to and an existing first name for humans. Blekkulf is a cephalopod, for which the Norwegian word is 'blekksprut', Rokkerolf is a skate, for which the Norwegian term is 'rokke', and Krabbelars is a crab, for which the Norwegian word is 'krabbe'. Rokkerolf's name also includes an alliteration and alludes to rock'n'roll, which is also taken up in his appearance: he wears sunglasses and has black hair styled in a pompadour typical of rock'n'roll style since the 1950s. His use of English words and sentences underlines his connection to this subculture that originated in the US. Sprelline's name is different from the others' because it does not hint at the fact that she is a fish, but more at something fish do, which is to flounder ['å sprelle']. All the names thus display a wordplay that hints at them being sea animals.

6.1 An anthropomorphized underwater storyworld

The plot begins in medias res, when Blekkulf, Rokkerolf, and Sprelline are examining barnacles through a magnifying glass. The first double-spread shows the three friends in a peaceful setting in front of some rocks, with several fish swimming in the background on the recto. The verso has a white background and features verbal text in which the friends talk to each other about their discoveries (fig. 6.1). The picturebook's first sentence is uttered by Blekkulf: "Look at this barnacle through the magnifying glass, Sprelline, isn't this exciting?" (Roestad, 1994, ds. 1, verso).[40] The first part of this sentence seems to be addressing readers, before Blekkulf mentions Sprelline as the addressee of what he is saying. With a close-up picture of the barnacle under the magnifying glass underneath the text, Blekkulf is inviting readers to examine his discovery. Thus, the protagonist involves readers from the start and invites them to perform a deictic shift and

[40] [Norwegian original: «Se på denne steinruren gjennom forstørrelsesglasset, Sprelline, er det ikke spennende?» (Roestad, 1994, ds. 1, verso).]

relocate to the storyworld as active participants. The picture's perspective underlines this invitation further, with Blekkulf's tentacle holding the magnifying glass from the side, and the barnacle being placed centrally on the page, so that readers are easily able to examine it. While Blekkulf is busy observing the barnacle, Sprelline has found a sea urchin. A closer look at the recto shows that she is looking at a pair of eyes on the rock, which looks similar to the barnacles on it, illustrating her discovery. Even on this first page, Rokkerolf mentions feeling like a detective, which is a key aspect of the story. Blekkulf's and Sprelline's magnifying glasses and Rokkerolf's flashlight underline his comment visually. The dynamic between verbal text and pictures displayed on this first double-spread generally applies to the whole of the picturebook. While the verbal text is focused on direct speech between the characters, their actions and the plot, the pictures have, for the most part, an illustrating and expanding function. On the one hand, they depict the environment in which the plot takes place, which is not described in detail or even mentioned in the verbal text apart from at one moment, when the environment changes drastically. On the other hand, they show details that are mentioned in the verbal text and illustrate them further. Overall, the picturebook is characterized by a large amount of verbal text, and since the pictures mostly have an illustrating function, the narrative can be understood to be bordering on an illustrated text at some points.

Several of the double-spreads in the beginning show water and plants in the background, and the clear colors of both indicate a healthy environment. Furthermore, since what is shown in the beginning is kept quite generic, the story could take place anywhere in the ocean where readers might imagine it. Readers are invited to create a more holistic mental model of the area where Blekkulf lives by using their individual knowledge and experiences of the ocean, which points back to the 'principle of minimal departure' (Ryan, 1991) as a general strategy for mentally modeling the storyworld in *Blekkulf*.

The group's decision to visit Krabbelars is triggered by Rokkerolf, who tells Blekkulf and Sprelline about a detective book he read that he had borrowed from their friend. On their way to see Krabbelars, Sprelline eventually starts to wonder whether they have swum the wrong way because the area looks unknown to her. While Blekkulf is sure that they are right and "the water is just a little murky" (Roestad, 1994, ds. 3, verso),[41] Rokkerolf disagrees and says that "murky water is

[41] [Norwegian original: «vannet er bare litt grumsete» (Roestad, 1994, ds. 3, verso).]

not *nothing*" (Roestad, 1994, ds. 3, verso, emphasis in the original).[42] The verso illustrates that Rokkerolf is right by showing five small fish who are swimming around the verbal text with worried looks on their faces. One fish is even carrying a small bag or suitcase, which is a clear visual hint to readers that there is more to the situation. The full-page picture on the recto also shows some algae floating around the friends, indicating how strongly the water is polluted. In the course of the following two double-spreads, the group goes deeper and deeper into the murky water, which is something that the pictures reflect. On one picture, the algae occlude the water so much that the three friends are barely visible. They want to turn around because they assume that Krabbelars might have moved somewhere else due to the pollution. However, they soon discover a big waste pipe. The double-spread showing this discovery has a white background and depicts the waste pipe, which spans both pages underneath the verbal text (fig. 6.2). The pipe is the visual focus of the double-spread, and the fact that it takes up almost the entire breadth of the picturebook (which is in landscape format) further underlines its size. The double-spread's white background also emphasizes the surprise and shock the friends experience upon discovering it. Since the background is no longer blue, the waste pipe clearly stands out as a foreign object in the storyworld. It is evident to the friends that the waste pipe is the reason why Krabbelars has moved. Sprelline explains that the waste coming out of the pipe promotes algae growth, showing that she has some form of prior knowledge of how water pollution and algae growth can be related. Sprelline also understands that it is not the waste pipe itself that is the culprit, but that humans onshore bear the responsibility here because they built the pipe and decide what happens with it. What is interesting about the waste pipe is that while the picturebook depicts other waste in the ocean, and not just what is coming out of the waste pipe, the other objects are not framed as waste or as problematic. Objects like the bottle in which the friends later place Blekkulf's letter, the detective gear, or even Rokkerolf's sunglasses can be assumed to stem from humans who have either lost those objects in the water or thrown them away, such that they eventually ended up on the sea bed. But apart from a plastic bag in the background of one picture, all those objects are being used, and their origin is neither questioned nor discussed. The problem of pollution clearly centers on the waste pipe.

[42] [Norwegian original: «Grumsete vann er vel ikke *bare* bare» (Roestad, 1994, ds. 3, verso, emphasis in the original).]

According to what Rokkerolf has read in the detective book, "[*t*]*he culprit always returns to the crime scene*" (Roestad, 1994, ds. 6, recto, emphasis in the original),[43] so the group decides to wait. Rokkerolf's comment states clearly that humans are responsible for the problem the friends have discovered. However, nobody appears and Blekkulf concludes that the humans possibly do not know that they are to blame for the situation the friends are in. As they realize that they cannot wait near the waste pipe for very long because the pollution is making them dizzy, Rokkerolf suggests swimming to the local underwater newspaper to tell them what is happening. Blekkulf points out that it is no use telling everyone in their area about the problem. It is rather humans who have to hear about the situation and help, since they are responsible for the situation, and it is therefore also up to them to do something about it. Without addressing readers directly, the picturebook lets them know about the situation, and invites them to start connecting what happens in the storyworld to the actual world they inhabit. Rokkerolf is, however, unsure about whether humans even care about the animals underwater. As the friends want to leave because they cannot breathe well anymore, the story reaches its dramatic climax – they get tangled up in the algae that also dominate the picture visually.

The turn of the page brings rescue, because Krabbelars has come to look for his friends. He cuts them loose and they manage to swim back into clearer water. The color of the water on the corresponding double-spread is lighter and bluer than on the previous one, where the friends are tangled up. There, the water has a more greenish color which visualizes the pollution. While Rokkerolf and Krabbelars joke a little after they are all cut loose, Blekkulf reminds them of the seriousness of the situation and the fact that they need someone onshore who can help them. Here, Blekkulf coins the term 'environmental detective' which is also in the picturebook's title. They decide to send a message in a bottle to humans onshore. The related picture illustrates the situation in which Blekkulf thinks about what to write; he chews on a pencil with a piece of paper in front of him. Rokkerolf illuminates a bottle with his flashlight, in which the letter is placed on the right page of the double-spread. The text on that page shows the content of the letter, which I will discuss in the following section. Optimism has returned to the friends' faces as they swim to the shore to place the bottle near a pier. After leaving the

[43] [Norwegian original: «*Den skyldige alltid vender tilbake til åstedet*» (Roestad, 1994, ds. 6, recto, emphasis in the original).]

bottle, they wait at the bottom of the pier, where a plastic bag in the background shows that the water is not entirely clear here, either, and that the waste pipe is not the only thing polluting the ocean. However, the plastic bag is not mentioned in the verbal text and thus remains a purely visual comment on the cleanliness of the water near the shore.

After some time, a hand holding a letter reaches into the water. The letter is from a girl named Tove and contains the answer that she wants to help Blekkulf and his friends "to make people up here onshore understand that environmental protection is important" (Roestad, 1994, ds. 11, recto).[44] The last double-spread shows a full-page picture of Blekkulf holding the hand of the girl with his tentacle and smiling (fig. 6.3). The verbal text on the left-hand page says that "[t]his is the first time he has felt the hand of a human. It feels warm and safe and good! He pushes it gently against his cheek, closes his eyes and thinks: – Tove is my friend, my very first friend onshore, and now I know that my dream can become reality!" (Roestad, 1994, ds. 12, verso).[45] This first meeting with a human gives the story a highly optimistic ending. The fact that Tove's hand feels "safe and good" also frames humans – at least those who are willing to help Blekkulf and his friends – as positive and not dangerous, which is something that Rokkerolf questions earlier in the story.

Blekkulf displays several features that are central to a genre with a long tradition in children's literature, the fable. The characters readers meet are anthropomorphized animals who are equipped with human characteristics and human thoughts (Schweikle & Hoheisel, 2007). They use objects in a human-like way, they use human language, and they generally behave like humans while still keeping some of their animal characteristics. Furthermore, the picturebook tells the story of a single case, the pollution of Blekkulf's habitat, which nonetheless allows us to derive a larger rule of conduct regarding environmental protection. The decidedly didactic orientation of the picturebook further underlines the story's closeness to the genre of the fable. Interestingly, though, *Blekkulf* breaks with the fable genre at a decisive point in the story. Usually, fables do not feature human

[44] [Norwegian original: «å få folk her oppe på land til å forstå at miljøvern er viktig» (Roestad, 1994, ds. 11, recto).]

[45] [Norwegian original: «Det er første gangen Blekkulf har kjent hånden til et menneske. Den kjennes varm og trygg og god! Han trykker den varsomt mot kinnet sitt, lukker øynene og tenker: – Tove er min venn, min aller første venn på land, og nå vet jeg at drømmen min kan bli til virkelighet!» (Roestad, 1994, ds. 12, verso).]

characters – but Blekkulf establishes contact with a human girl at the end of the picturebook. The breaking of the genre convention underlines the importance of what is happening. In order to solve the problem at hand, Blekkulf has to cross borders – in this case, the border between humans and nonhumans, as well as the borders of the fable genre.

Apart from having characteristics of the genre of the fable, *Blekkulf* can also be described as displaying a variation of a home/away/home story, which Perry Nodelman (1996, pp. 155–159) identifies as a common theme in children's literature. While Blekkulf and his friends live in their usual and safe environment in the beginning, the idea of visiting Krabbelars leads to them leaving home and discovering the waste pipe, which poses a threat to their safe home. The ending, with Blekkulf's positive experience of contacting human children, suggests a possibility for the reestablishment of a safe situation at home for him and his friends. The behavioral development of the plot is also taken up in the physical journey of the characters, where they leave home to visit their friend, get into a dangerous situation away from home, and get back to a safe place in the end. However, *Blekkulf* varies the home/away/home theme in a way that is similar to how it also breaks with conventions of the fable genre. The protagonist's contact with Tove suggests that a safe situation at home is possible, but it cannot be established without outside help from humans. While the danger in this story is located away from where Blekkulf and his friends live, it is also important to note that it is not *far* away from where they live. Although the friends do not discover the waste pipe at home, it does still pose a threat to them. This is exemplified through Krabbelars, who moved away because of the pollution where he lives. While the story takes up a well-known pattern as its base, it does vary that pattern in the end. Much like the crossing of borders of genre and species, this aspect of the story also illustrates the scale and seriousness of the problem at hand.

The storyworld in *Blekkulf* is characterized by an overall optimistic atmosphere, even though the characters do experiences distressing situations and serious problems. Readers are invited to ally themselves with Blekkulf and his friends by performing a deictic shift into the storyworld. This invitation is taken up on the verbal as well as the visual level on the first double-spread of the picturebook, and it points back to my introductory comment about a general pattern in the storyworld of *Blekkulf*, where nature seeks an alliance with children. This alliance is established in the beginning by readerly immersion into the storyworld, and it is strengthened and more closely connected to the actual world

toward the end of the story, when the protagonist becomes friends with the human girl Tove. When it comes to the point of establishing a connection between readers and Blekkulf, and between *Blekkulf*'s storyworld and the actual world, it is also important to remember that the larger storyworld of *Blekkulf* is transmedial. It not only spans different media, but connects to the actual world through 'Blekkulf's Environmental Detectives'. Thus, the picturebook in particular, as well as the character in a more general sense, creates a close connection between storyworld and readers' actual world in which the former can be said to have a practical impact on the latter.

6.2 Raising awareness of environmental problems

Aspects of citizenship are mostly addressed after the friends find the waste pipe and realize that those responsible for the pollution in the sea are those who live above the surface, humans. In the case of *Blekkulf*, the goal of the environmental action depicted in the story consists of making those who are responsible for the pollution aware of the situation. Interestingly, though, Blekkulf does not specify what the environmental problem is in his letter to humans. Since an earlier double-spread showed and discussed the waste pipe as the polluter, it is highly probable that readers create a connection between the waste pipe and the problem Blekkulf mentions in his letter.

However, upon discovering the waste pipe, Blekkulf and his friends first discuss the question of who is responsible for the pollution and why they are polluting the sea. Rokkerolf asks whether humans are bad or dislike the sea in general. The situation upsets him so much that "he forgets to speak English" (Roestad, 1994, ds. 6, verso).[46] Rokkerolf's departure from his characteristic way of speaking underlines his anger over the pollution. The friends discuss the matter and first want to wait at the crime scene. However, since nobody appears, they conclude that the humans maybe do not realize that they are polluting the sea, which is why they decide to call someone's attention to the problem. This can be read as an optimistic perspective, because the assumption that humans do not know about the problems their waste pipe is causing ascribes some naïveté to them and their strategies for waste disposal. What becomes clear in this discussion is that Blekkulf and his friends are the ones suffering from the consequences of pollution,

[46] [Norwegian original: «han glemmer å snakke engelsk» (Roestad, 1994, ds. 6, verso).]

while they do not have any power to stop the pollution themselves. This situation can be read allegorically regarding the global asymmetry of power between the Global North and the Global South, in which the people who are suffering most from the consequences of pollution, and who lack the power to change the situation, are not the ones causing the biggest amount of pollution (Cao, 2015, p. 91). In *Blekkulf*, however, the asymmetry is addressed not as a Global North/Global South issue, but rather as an onshore/underwater issue, as well as a human/nonhuman problematic. The fact that Blekkulf and his friends are the ones suffering from someone else's pollution also depicts humans as ecological debtors and, accordingly, the underwater characters as ecological creditors (Cao, 2015, p. 89).

The decision to take action and write a letter to humans stems from the friends' self-conception as environmental detectives, which they have developed throughout the story. However, the question of what an environmental detective does changes over the course of the story and becomes more refined. In the beginning, being an environmental detective entails examining the environment and taking a close look at the different beings the friends discover, for example the barnacle on the very first double-spread. But after discovering the waste pipe, being an environmental detective means examining the origin of an environmental problem rather than just looking at flora and fauna as they are. The friends' detective work gains the quality of uncovering environmental injustice, which shifts it from a more observational to a more investigative activity. In that sense, becoming an environmental detective also means that the friends are concerned with the social and moral question of who is responsible for the pollution and the suffering of others because of it. But in the beginning of the picturebook, the detective quality of the friends' activity occurred, so to speak, mainly in the area of biology. The change in the notion of what an environmental detective is can be connected to the change in the environment that Blekkulf and the others encounter. While they engage in detective work in a fairly healthy and peaceful environment in the beginning, they come to a polluted place later, which then also changes their task profoundly. Their investigations, much like their environment, become less playful and more serious, which underlines the importance of the problem. This also connects to the home/away/home structure of the picturebook: away from home, the friends are challenged with a serious environmental problem and therefore need to develop and change their practices, which is reflected in how their detective work is altered as well.

After the discovery of the waste pipe, Blekkulf points to the new dimension their role as environmental detectives now contains when he says: "It's just that it doesn't help to tell everyone down here how bad it is, as long as those who do that live onshore! A real detective doesn't just find out what happened, he also finds out how and why it happened. We need help from someone onshore" (Roestad, 1994, ds. 7, verso).[47] His emphasis on what a "real" detective does further underlines that they are now no longer playing detective, but they have really *become* detectives. He points to the need to get the attention of the people who are actually responsible for the problem, instead of telling the local underwater newspaper, which is what Rokkerolf suggests. The civic action Blekkulf and his friends take leads to a moral duty for the readers (and, beyond them, for humans in general), who are also addressed directly later in the text. Since the text has already named humans as being responsible for the pollution at hand, the action Blekkulf and his friends are about to undertake calls on humans to react to it in a moral way. Rokkerolf is at first a little skeptical about the idea of getting help from humans and asks whether they might be superficial, given that they live above the sea's surface. In the Norwegian original, this amounts to a wordplay on the very similar words for 'surface' [overflaten] and 'superficial' [overflatisk]. The question of whether humans are superficial does, however, not get pursued further, since the friends' entanglement in the algae needs their attention. But Tove's promise to help make people aware of the importance of conservation does suggest a belated answer to Rokkerolf's questions. At the same time, the development of the situation and the ending of the picturebook seem to bring a loss of agency with them. While Blekkulf and his friends first decide that they have to take action against the pollution, their action results in them losing the agency they initially had. At the end of the picturebook, agency has moved from the animals to Tove – and, vicariously, to humans in general. While the contact established with Tove, and especially her response to the letter, are clearly framed as positive, it is possible to scrutinize what the consequences of this contact are for Blekkulf's own agency. Now that humans know about the problem, he has also become a victim who is not able to change the situation with his own power. This again points to the asymmetry I have already mentioned. While Blekkulf can speak up about the

[47] [Norwegian original: «Det er bare det at det ikke hjelper å fortelle alle her nede hvor fælt det er så lenge de som driver med det bor på land! En ekte detektiv finner ikke bare ut hva som har skjedd, han finner ut hvorfor og hvordan det har skjedd også. Vi trenger hjelp fra noen oppe på land» (Roestad, 1994, ds. 7, verso).]

pollution, he lacks the power to change the situation on his own and it is the moral obligation of humans to do so.

Blekkulf and his friends take action against a local problem at the place where they live. However, since their home is not a specifically defined place, the situation they experience can be read allegorically as a global phenomenon. Although the girl's name, Tove, does suggest a Scandinavian setting, readers do not find out whether Tove finds Blekkulf's letter at the place where she lives or somewhere else where she might be on vacation. The contact that is established between Blekkulf and the girl on the last double-spread also expands the community depicted in the picturebook. While readers follow a small but diverse group that consists of different sea animals throughout the story, it includes both animals and humans at the end. The fact that Blekkulf can directly communicate with a human through writing leads to him being listened to. This situation can be interpreted in light of what Latour (2004) proposes in *Politics of Nature*. While humans and nonhumans would need a mediator to communicate in Latour's suggested model, this is not the case in the picturebook because Blekkulf is able to write using human language, which of course highly simplifies any potential direct communication between him and Tove. Since readers are invited to identify with Tove – which is something I will discuss more in the next section – Blekkulf communicates as if with readers, as well as with the girl in the story, through his letter. Therefore, his plea for help is something readers are implicitly requested to comply with. Since the place where the plot is set can be read allegorically, the same applies to Blekkulf's request. The letter's greeting – "Dear Environmental Detective" – likewise addresses readers who are identified as members of the positively connotated group Blekkulf and his friends have established in the course of the story. Thus, it creates a group identity in which readers are given a responsible role as the key people who can solve Blekkulf's problem by raising awareness of conservation among humans.

While, in *Blekkulf*, humans in general are identified as those responsible for the problem the characters experience, it seems that the call to action is directed more strongly at child readers than at adults, not least because it is arguably a child who finds Blekkulf's letter.[48] Blekkulf's plea does also not contain an explicit request to do something about the situation, but to help make people aware of the

[48] This also refers back to the comment Vebjørg Tingstad (2006) makes about children's responsibility in *Blekkulf* more generally.

problem. This can be considered a necessary first step on the way to solving the problem, and a step that the story suggests children can contribute to. And since his plea can be read allegorically as something humans everywhere should do, the implied hope is that readers will respond to it in the same way Tove does. Generally, the approach to the problem of pollution depicted in the picturebook is a liberal one. The main goal of *Blekkulf* is to inform readers about the problem, but the decision of what needs to be done is up to humans. This complies with the central position that Derek Bell (2005) ascribes to political liberalism, where any more concrete definitions of what constitutes a healthy environment, as well as what needs to be done to achieve that goal, are subject to political debate. And while *Blekkulf* makes a case for fighting marine pollution, the question of what or how much needs to be done remains both unasked and unanswered.

6.3 Transferring readers' engagement to the actual world

Readers of *Blekkulf* are for the most part not addressed directly in the main story, but in the picturebook's endpapers. By greeting readers in the beginning and saying goodbye to them at the end, the text establishes a direct connection between readers and the titular hero, who seems to be aware of the readers' actual world that lies outside of the storyworld he inhabits. This reflects the close connection between the fictional character of Blekkulf and the actual world readers inhabit. As mentioned in the first section of the analysis, the cephalopod transcends the storyworld he inhabits to enter other media and was even used to connect to readers' experiences of the actual world by means of 'Blekkulf's Environmental Detectives' for as long as the organization was connected to the character.

Although Blekkulf is a childlike character, he also acts as a guide or teacher for children when it comes to environmental conservation. The hope conveyed through the picturebook is clearly that the first step to solving the problem of marine pollution is to make people aware of it. This is a moral call that anticipates that discovering the existence of a problem will lead to its being solved. This also hints at what Benito Cao (2015) remarks about environmental education in general: "The integration of the environment into formal education tends to operate under the assumption that citizens fail to act responsibly only or primarily out of ignorance, and that knowledge will automatically lead to action" (p. 210). As mentioned previously, this is generally a more liberal standpoint. The fact that the picturebook ascribes some naïveté to humans points to the childlike perspective it

takes on the world, since both the protagonists and the addressees of the picturebooks are children.

Readers are most directly invited to identify with the girl Tove, although she appears only briefly toward the story's ending. She is the only human who appears in the picturebook, and she can be read as a stand-in for (Norwegian) readers in general, since the only thing readers find out about her is her name and the only part of her that is shown is her hand. In line with Iser (1978), the whole character can thus be read as a gap that readers are invited to fill with themselves. In this way, *Blekkulf* invites readers to become the protagonist's friends and help him spread awareness about the importance of environmental conservation. Readers are generally invited to discuss the role of humans and identify with them, since Rokkerolf brings up the question of their role twice throughout the story. The first time, when he asks whether people are bad or do not like the ocean, his question is also the last text that is written on the page in question. The page break invites readers to pause and discuss Rokkerolf's question, and maybe position themselves in relation to it. The second time is on the subsequent double-spread when the friends are discussing the need for help from someone onshore. Rokkerolf's question of whether humans are maybe superficial since they live above the surface is, as mentioned previously, not discussed further. But as with the first time humans are brought up, readers might engage with the question themselves and discuss whether or not humans are superficial. These two incidents encourage readers to identify with humans although they are absent from the story for the most part.

Another invitation for readers to ultimately identify specifically with Tove also happens through the letter Blekkulf writes. It takes up an entire page, which shows Reken Pelle, a shrimp who has not appeared earlier in the story, putting the letter into a glass bottle. The letter reads: "Dear Environmental Detective, I and my friends are environmental detectives in the ocean, but to solve our problems down here, we need a friend onshore. Hope you will help us. Greetings, Blekkulf" (Roestad, 1994, ds. 9, recto).[49] This letter addresses readers directly in its hope that they will help Blekkulf and his friends with their problems, and it also invites readers to identify themselves as environmental detectives. As mentioned before,

[49] [Norwegian original: "Kjære Miljødetektiv, Jeg og vennene mine er miljødetektiver i havet, men for å løse problemene våre her nede trenger vi en venn på land. Håper du vil hjelpe oss. Hilsen Blekkulf» (Roestad, 1994, ds. 9, recto).]

the letter does not specify which problems Blekkulf is talking about, but readers are clearly expected to fill this gap with knowledge from what they have read in the picturebook so far. What is more, since readers have followed Blekkulf and his friends throughout the story, they have not only gained an understanding of the problem of pollution, but they have also experienced the uncomfortable and dangerous situation together with the characters. The picturebook first seeks to build emotional and cognitive understanding on the part of the reader by showing Blekkulf's situation and explaining why the waste pipe poses a threat, before encouraging readers to become environmental detectives.

At the same time that the text invites readers to ultimately identify with Tove, it also invites them to sympathize with Blekkulf and his friends, since for the majority of the story, readers are a part of their group, examining and discovering Blekkulf's environment together with the animals. This builds up empathy in the readers before introducing a human character who changes the dynamic of the story.

By showing details of various objects that the verbal text mentions, readers are encouraged to take a closer look and take on the role of environmental detectives together with Blekkulf. This is further enhanced through the continuous anthropomorphization of the characters, which can be argued to heighten readers' understanding of what Blekkulf and his friends are experiencing. An example of this is already the very first picture in the story, where Blekkulf discovers a barnacle and readers can observe it together with him in the picture shown below the relevant verbal text. Another strategy to invite readers to examine the pictures like environmental detectives is the plastic bag shown in the background on one of the last double-spreads. The plastic bag does not play a role in the story's plot, and it is not commented upon in any way. But the bag itself is a visual comment on marine pollution and points to the fact that there are other pollution problems in the ocean and not just the waste pipe that is the focus of this particular story.

The picturebook, as well as the whole series about Blekkulf in general, is openly didactic. The TV series, established in the late 1980s, was broadcast on the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) in a program called 'Barne-TV' ['Children's TV']. Established in the 1960s, the program had didactic goals and aimed to educate child viewers (Birkeland, Risa, et al., 2018, p. 395). Even though didactic aspects were not as central during the 1980s as they were during the 1960s (Birkeland, Risa, et al., 2018, p. 396), Blekkulf's close connection to 'Children's TV' underlines the didactic orientation of the character as a whole.

6.4 Conclusion

The main factors concerning environmental citizenship in *Blekkulf* are communication and raising awareness of environmental problems. In accordance with this, the picturebook's story does not end with the environmental problem that is central to the plot having been solved, but rather the solution is left to readers' imagination – and actions – after establishing Blekkulf and Tove have cemented their friendship. The picturebook's general attitude toward environmental problems can be described as a liberal perspective, since the narrative does not explicitly discuss what needs to be done, but it focuses instead on starting a conversation about the problem at hand. Raising awareness of environmental problems is presented as the moral duty that Blekkulf has – and, by extension, that readers also have. Raising awareness as the necessary action presented in the picturebook gives the story, as I showed, a highly optimistic ending, although it does not discuss possible steps to solve the problem at hand, apart from making adults aware of what is happening.

The text addresses readers directly through its endpapers, as well as in a key situation in the story, when Blekkulf asks for help from someone onshore. Because readers are invited to identify with humans, and specifically with the girl Tove, it can be understood that Blekkulf's letter addresses both her and readers simultaneously, which builds a strong connection between the storyworld and the actual world. The verbal text is generally characterized by direct speech between the characters and some comments from the omniscient third-person narrator. Furthermore, the verbal text in the picturebook is quite extensive and contains both humorous wordplay and explanations of natural and environmentally relevant phenomena. The visual style of *Blekkulf* is characterized by its cartoon style and the anthropomorphization of the animal characters; not only do they have human-like faces, but the main characters, as well as the fish that are displayed as more decorative elements on the margins of some of the pages, use everyday "human" objects such as sunglasses, bags, magnifying glasses, and torches in a human-like way. I have argued that this invites readers to immerse themselves into the storyworld and build an understanding of the problems the characters experience in the narrative.

Blekkulf concentrates mostly on fostering an emotional and cognitive understanding of what the picturebook's characters experience in the course of the story to invite environmental engagement that transfers to the actual world. The picturebook's optimistic, open ending connects closely to the transmedial

storyworld of *Blekkulf* in general, since readers' identification as environmental detectives connects to 'Blekkulf's Environmental Detectives', which transcends the storyworld and encourages children to engage in environmental conservation in the actual world they inhabit. The narrative's gaps invite readers to create a storyworld that lies close to readers' individual knowledge about the actual world, and possibly to imagine that *Blekkulf* is taking place near their own living space. A superordinate pattern that emerged in the picturebook is how nonhuman nature seeks an alliance with human children to make adults aware of environmental problems. This alliance can be seen on the storyworld level of the picturebook, as well as on a transmedial level that also connects the larger storyworld of *Blekkulf* to the actual world.

7 Lise Myhre: *Nemi*

The comic strip series *Nemi* about the young goth woman Nemi Montoya started in 1997 and had its national breakthrough in 1999, when *Nemi* appeared in the Norwegian daily newspaper *Dagbladet* as a daily comic strip series. In 2003, *Nemi* was established as a monthly magazine (Holen, 2021). Until January 2016, *Nemi* was also printed in the UK and Ireland in the newspaper *Metro*. Every monthly issue of *Nemi* has a general topic and contains comic strips by Lise Myhre, as well as by other comic artists. In addition, every issue features several pages about its general topic in the form of one or more nonfiction texts. The titular protagonist is concerned about all kinds of injustice, and cares about the well-being of animals and about climate change.

Many of the comic strips in the series can be described as satirical, and they often use irony and exaggeration as stylistic devices for a comical and sometimes even cynical effect. As *Nemi* is published in the form of comic strips that tell short stories, the series' storyworld is fragmented and does not contain a lot of details. Apart from the protagonist, there are some friends of hers that feature regularly in the comic strips, such as her friend Cyan or her boyfriend Grimm. The locations where the stories take place are often undefined, but the general setting of the series is Norway, more precisely the Oslo region. The comics are drawn in a mostly realistic cartoon style, although Nemi herself displays some caricatural features. She is the most recognizable character in the series, has a chalky white skin color and long black hair, and is almost always wearing black clothing, underlining her belonging to the goth subculture in a caricatural way. Her stereotypically 'goth' look makes Nemi stand out from all the other characters who, for example, have a more realistic skin color. Cyan, one of the characters who appears most frequently after Nemi, is also easily recognizable due to her cyan blue hair color. Generally speaking, it is typical for newspaper strips that the characters "are kept in some kind of stasis regarding their looks" (Lefèvre, 2017, pp. 17–18), which means, among other things, that they do not age (p. 17). This is also true for the characters in *Nemi*.

In this chapter, I analyze five different comic strips from the series. Four of them (figs. 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.5) are featured in a special issue about the environment from 2010, intended for use in schools with grades 8–10. The special issue was created in cooperation with "LOOP Miljøskole", ['LOOP environmental school'], a private association that provides various educational materials for school classes.

The comic strips were not specifically created for the special issue, but existing strips were gathered together for the purpose of talking about environmental problems in an educational context (Myhre, 2010). One comic strip I analyze in this chapter (fig. 7.4) was printed in issue 0909 about biodiversity in 2009 but did not feature in the special issue.

7.1 A fragmented storyworld

The storyworld in *Nemi* is, as I mentioned, characterized by the fact that readers only ever see small parts of it in one comic strip. In addition to that, regular readers of the series know that many comic strips end on a satirical note, which means that certain expectations of the short narratives can be activated when readers engage with a *Nemi* strip. Several of the examples discussed here play with this kind of sarcastic twist at the comic strips' ending.

The first comic strip (fig. 7.1) is a one-page story consisting of ten panels in three rows. It starts with a thought experiment: "What if there was an ice age and all life was gone…" (Myhre, 2010, p. 10, panel 1).[50] The comic strip goes on to tell the story of how life on the planet evolves and decays because of human behavior in a seemingly never-ending cycle. The first nine panels, which are all the same size, show small snippets of this cycle, with a single plant coming through the ground, stereotypical depictions of early humans, and several pictures of ice ages which kill all life on the planet, mentioned several times in the short text. Even though the narrative itself is very short and does not consist of much more than what is minimally required to constitute a narrative, verbal text and pictures together create an integrated impression. This impression is created though what Scott McCloud (1993) calls "closure", which he defines as "*observing the parts* but *perceiving the whole*" (p. 63, emphases in the original). The tale of the evolution of life on Earth potentially triggers a plethora of associations in readers' heads, and since both verbal text and pictures do not give many details about what the world that evolves and decays time and again looks like, readers can easily immerse themselves in a world that looks exactly like the one they inhabit. The environments that are shown in the panels can be read allegorically as globally applicable situations. In this sense, every panel stands in vicariously for a more general situation, although the comic strip does generally take a Western

[50] [Norwegian original: «Hva hvis det var en istid og alt liv var borte…» (Myhre, 2010, p. 10, panel 1).]

perspective as its starting point. This is mainly due to the repeated reference to ice ages, which are climate events that affect moderate climates such as Europe and North America most strongly.

The second and fifth panels are especially interesting because they contrast starkly with each other. The second panel says "slowly but surely, the world came to life…" (Myhre, 2010, p. 10, panel 2),[51] which gives the impression of the planet being in an early stage of development. The picture on the panel takes this up by depicting a large drop in which a landscape with a big conifer is reflected, giving an overall impression of a healthy environment. The fifth panel, however, describes the planet's decay in a picture that shows several smoking columns and barrels marked as toxic in front of a greenish sky. The corresponding verbal text states: "But humans exploited the planet ruthlessly and did not try to save it until it was too late" (Myhre, 2010, p. 10, panel 5).[52] This paints a picture of a possible future that might come to pass if no action is taken against anthropogenic climate change and pollution, and in the comic strip, they lead to humanity's (temporary) extinction. Interestingly, the human depicted in panel four is a hominin standing in the snow with a bat in his left hand. He looks a little oafish, which creates a comical contrast to the fifth panel, in which the text clearly states that humans are responsible for the destruction of the planet and thus frames the hominin retrospectively as irresponsible or potentially even evil. Readers might even ask themselves how the oafish-looking hominin, who is a stand-in for humanity as a whole, managed to destroy the planet.

The last panel features Nemi and her friend Cyan in a shop. Nemi is holding a can of hairspray and says "So what I'm saying is: Maybe that is the point, that Tellus is supposed to be a single big phoenix. And that it is **okay** if we destroy it?"[53] (Myhre, 2010, p. 10, panel 10, emphasis in the original). This gives the whole preceding narrative a new context since it now turns out the narrative voice in the previous panels was Nemi's and she has been imagining this story to justify buying hairspray. Her friend has apparently been listening to Nemi for quite some time, because she is leaning on a shelf, has spiderwebs on her arm, and replies: "just **buy**

[51] [Norwegian original: «Sakte men sikkert våknet verden til live…» (Myhre, 2010, p. 10, panel 2).]

[52] [Norwegian original: «Men menneskene drev rovdrift på planeten, og prøvde ikke å redde den før det ble for sent» (Myhre, 2010, p. 10, panel 5).]

[53] [Norwegian original: «Så det jeg sier er: kanskje er det meningen at Tellus skal være en eneste stor fugl føniks. Og at det er **greit** at vi ødelegger den?» (Myhre, 2010, p. 10, panel 10, emphasis in the original).]

the @#★✞ hairspray”[54] (Myhre, 2010, p. 10, panel 10, emphasis in the original). Setting the story of the repeated evolution and decay of life on the planet in the context of justifying buying a can of hairspray gives the narrative an unexpected and funny turn. This is an example of how reading expectations are activated when starting a story, and how these expectations can be subverted by the end of it. This recalls the concept of scripts, to which David Herman (2002) refers with relation to storyworlds. Drawing on AI researchers, Herman describes scripts as “a dynamic form” used to “store[…] past experiences” (p. 85). He further argues that “dynamic repertoires [scripts – B. H.] help me to know how events typically unfold during common occasions” (p. 89). The comic strip plays with this kind of knowledge by giving the big story of the circle of life and decay a trivial turn.

The second comic strip (fig. 7.2) also features Nemi and her friend Cyan. In the four-panel-narrative, the two go to a kiosk to buy a drink and have a conversation on the way. The focus of the panels lies on the two characters and not much of the environment is shown, apart from in the third panel, in which the two stand in front of the kiosk. In the first panel, Cyan seems to summarize their conversation up to the point at which the comic strip starts: “…so you have hope that humans are opening their eyes now and becoming environmentally aware?” (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 1).[55] Apparently, they had been talking about the planet’s situation and how humans have been handling it. However, the conversation immediately takes its first unexpected turn with Nemi’s reply to Cyan in the first panel: “Absolutely not. Maybe for a bit, before we go back to old habits” (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 1).[56] Nemi then refers to other known cases where humanity faced serious environmental challenges and concludes from these examples that “we don’t like to focus on anything but ourselves for too long” (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 2).[57] She goes on to explain to Cyan that she expects the planet to dispose of humans eventually, which clarifies that Nemi was talking solely about the planet, not about whether or not humans can live there under good conditions. The comic strip ends with Cyan stating “Ah. So ‘good’ in a very relative sense” (Myhre, 2010,

[54] [Norwegian original: «Bare **kjøp** den @#★✞ hårsprayen» (Myhre, 2010, p. 10, panel 10, emphasis in the original).]

[55] [Norwegian original: «… så du har tro på at menneskene får opp øynene nå, og blir miljøbevisste?» (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 1).]

[56] [Norwegian original: «Absolutt ikke. Kanskje for en liten stund, før vi vender tilbake til gamle vaner.» (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 1).]

[57] [Norwegian original: «vi liker ikke å fokusere lenge av gangen på annet enn oss selv.» (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 2).]

p.7, panel 4),[58] to which Nemi replies "I am relatively positive" (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 4).[59]

In the third comic strip (fig. 7.3), Nemi and a boy sit on the floor at an unspecified location. The boy is trying to repair a vase with glue. He is sticking his tongue out, emphasizing the difficulty of the task. In front of him lies a slingshot and a small stone, which hints at the reason why the vase is broken. Nemi is talking to the boy with a slightly irritated look on her face. She says: "For one thing, your parents have contributed to the melting of the polar caps and to the fact that seventy percent of all flora and half of all wildlife are in danger of going extinct in the near future" (Myhre, 2010, p. 13, panel 1).[60] In the second panel, the boy looks at Nemi and her remark is contextualized as she continues: "Shouldn't that be enough as ammunition to defend yourself with the next time they want to ground you?" (Myhre, 2010, p. 13, panel 2).[61] This gives context to the situation and explains why Nemi is trying to make an argument about what the boy's parents have done wrong in her eyes. The comic strip takes its punch line from the surprise that the serious accusations Nemi brings forth against the boy's parents in the first panel are intended to serve as arguments against being grounded because the boy broke a vase with a slingshot.

These two short comic strips illustrate the incompleteness that Doležel (1998) names as a central characteristic of storyworlds, and use it as a central narrative strategy. The two examples feature a situation that is set into a broader context in the course of the short narrative, and readers need to adjust the context in which the situation that is narrated takes place. In fig. 7.2, readers enter the narrative in the middle of the conversation between Nemi and Cyan, and over the course of the four panels, they get more information about what the two had been talking about before the scene that is narrated. In fig. 7.3, the second panel contextualizes the situation between Nemi and the boy in front of her, which refers to an event that happened prior to the beginning of the short narrative, namely that the boy seems to have broken a vase and got into trouble with his parents for it. In

[58] [Norwegian original: «Ah, så «bra» på en veldig relativ måte.» (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 4).]

[59] [Norwegian original: «Jeg er relativt positiv.» (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 4).]

[60] [Norwegian original: «For å nevne noe har foreldrene dine bidratt til at polene smelter og at søtti prosent av alt planteliv og halvparten av alt dyreliv står i fare for å dø ut i nære fremtid.» (Myhre, 2010, p. 13, panel 1).]

[61] [Norwegian original: «Burde ikke det holde som motammo til neste gang de vil gi deg husarrest?» (Myhre, 2010, p. 13, panel 2).]

both cases, readers are invited to imagine the situations that the comic strips refer to, and thus construct a holistic storyworld in their minds, even though they have only read stories consisting of few panels.

The fourth comic strip (fig. 7.4) consists of four panels that are arranged slightly offset from each other, so that they take up a whole page. The panels are dominated by a letter Nemi writes as a reaction to an episode of 'Rikets Tilstand' ('State of the Realm'), a TV program that aired on the commercial TV station TV2 from 1999 until 2002. Unlike the other examples in this chapter, this comic strip clearly refers to a specific cultural object that existed in the actual world, thus establishing a close connection between the storyworld and the actual word readers inhabit. Moreover, given that the TV program in question aired until 2002, and the specific episode Nemi refers to was aired in the year 2000, this is also a cultural reference that addresses the older part of *Nemi's* readership more specifically than younger readers because older readers are more likely to be familiar with the TV program the comic strip refers to.

Apart from Nemi herself, the panels show only her letter, and the postbox she puts it in. The background of the panels consists of neutral tones, so the verbal text is the clear focus of the story. What distinguishes this comic strip from the examples discussed so far is that it lacks the more obviously sarcastic and funny undertone of the other comic strips to a large degree. Instead, Nemi's letter, in which she renounces her status as a Norwegian citizen, and indeed her status as a human altogether, as a reaction to a documentary about the breeding and sale of fur in Norway appears on the one hand as highly serious, even though her reaction to the TV program she has watched may on the other hand appear as exaggerated, which creates a comical effect. In her letter, Nemi is outspoken about being shocked about the suffering that humans inflict on animals, compares the production of fur to concentration camps, and wonders where "the respect for life" (Myhre, 2009, p. 28, panel 2)[62] is. The comic strip does not show any of the things Nemi is mad about, but readers are invited to imagine what she writes about in the reading process, or possibly to remember what was shown in the TV program. The neutral background encourages the construction of mental images for readers since the visual text does not give any guidelines as to what to imagine. As a conclusion to her letter, Nemi emphasizes that she is not willing to discuss the issue further with the Norwegian authorities. To underline her standpoint, the last panel shows

[62] [Norwegian original: «respekten for livet» (Myhre, 2009, p. 28, panel 2).]

Nemi walking away from the postbox in which she has put the letter in the third panel.

The fifth and last example (fig. 7.5) is another full-page comic strip, which consists of nine panels in three rows. The comic strip features the fable of the frog and the scorpion. The fable's origins seem to be unclear and different versions of the fable exist. However, the fable's basic narrative pattern seems to come from the Orient (Takeda, 2011). In this version of 'The Frog and the Scorpion', the verbal text is distributed over the nine panels of the comic strip:

> [1] The scorpion asked the frog to help him cross the river.
> [2] "Let me sit on your back to get to the other side."
> [4] "Imagine if you stung me when we were on the way, so that I drowned?"
> [5] But the scorpion laughed. "That wouldn't be reasonable. If I sting you, we will both drown."
> [6] That makes sense, thought the frog, and let the scorpion climb up on his back.
> [8] Dying, the frog gasped: "Why did you sting me, now both of us will drown!"
> [9] And the scorpion sighed: "It is neither reasonable nor does it make sense. It's my ***nature***." (Myhre, 2010, p. 23, emphasis in the original)[63]

In this comic strip, the pictures in the panels parallel the verbal text. The interplay between the two modalities creates a bleak atmosphere that evokes Nemi's general pessimism regarding humans and human behavior, although she herself does not appear in the comic strip. The general interpretation of the fable positions humans as the scorpion. What happens through the interplay between verbal text and pictures in this comic strip is that the pictures depict some of the developments and consequences of the scorpion's – humans' – supposedly instinctive behavior. The verbal and visual layers of the comic strip add up to an impression that might be

[63] [Norwegian original: «[1] Skorpionen spurte frosken om hjelp til å krysse elven. [2] «La meg få sitte på ryggen din til den andre siden.» [4] «Tenk om du stikker meg når vi er midtveis, så jeg drukner?» [5] Men skorpionen lo. «Det ville ikke være fornuftig. Stikker jeg deg, så drukner vi begge» [6] Det var logisk, tenkte frosken, og lot skorpionen klatre opp på ryggen sin. [8] Døende gispet frosken: «Hvorfor stakk du meg. Når drukner vi begge!» [9] Og skorpionen sukket: «Det er ikke fornuftig eller logisk. Det er min ***natur***»», (Myhre, 2010, p. 23, emphasis in the original).]

perceived as provocatively pessimistic, since one of the story's implications could be that there is no hope for a better future.

The panels show different snapshots of life on the planet. The connection between the panels can be described as aspect-to-aspect transitions that do not necessarily indicate a flow of time, but rather depict "different **aspects** of a place, idea, or mood" (McCloud, 1993, p. 72). The third panel, which shows part of the Earth as seen from space, is a clear indicator of the global scale of the comic strip, as well as signaling that global warming is one of the comic strip's topics. The impressions the panels convey over the course of the story build a global view that foregrounds the universality of what is being both told and shown. Readers are also invited to relate what they see set in the different snapshots to a global context. This is another example of what McCloud (1993) calls "closure". One reason for the global impression the comic strips create, is that the panels show quite undefined places and use some easily recognizable visual elements that create a certain context in readers' minds. The single panels thus add up to a larger view of the world in readers' minds, which allows them to understand the global scale the comic strip addresses.

The first panel shows two people eating at the beach and a plane in the background. The fact that the couple are seemingly unworried indicates that this comic strip also takes a Western perspective as its starting point. The sixth panel creates a sharp contrast to the first one. It shows a bird covered in oil at the beach and an oil spill in the background. Both the first and the sixth panels take up fossil fuels as a topic, but the sixth panel problematizes the aspect of pollution, which is not visible in the first panel. Flora and fauna are positioned as the frog in the sixth panel, which stresses humanity's role as the scorpion. The last panel shows the justification the scorpion gives. Here, the interplay between verbal text and picture creates a strong sense of cynicism. A human skeleton sits on a pile of stuff, clinging to a bag of chips and various other objects. It turns out to be overconsumption and, more generally, greed that leads to the end of humanity. In addition, there is also a pink note attached to the bag of chips that reads "because you deserve it", which gives the last panel a highly sarcastic quality, suggesting that given the greedy and destructive behavior of many humans, the species might deserve its ultimate destruction.

Figs. 7.1 and 7.5 are the two examples that are most explicitly outspoken about environmental problems on a visual level. Fig. 7.5 in particular uses well-known images of environmental degradation that make the theme of the comic

strip very clear. In the other comic strips, especially in figs. 7.2 and 7.4, the verbal text is the clear focus of the story. Although both stories have an environmental topic, the environments depicted in the panels do not reflect the respective topic of conversation directly. Rather, from what is written in the verbal text, readers are invited to mentally construct environments without the comic strip giving them visual guidelines. Referring again to Marie-Laure Ryan's 'principle of minimal departure' (Ryan, 1991), readers model in their heads a visual image of what the characters are talking about that is as close to the actual world as possible, sometimes with only a few cues that prescribe what the storyworld in certain comic strips looks like.

As becomes clear through these examples, the storyworld of *Nemi* is first and foremost characterized by the main character, rather than the locations and environments where the stories take place. In many cases, readers do not know exactly where Nemi is, and they have very little information about what her surroundings look like. Nevertheless, the characteristic drawing style of the comic strips and the appearance of the protagonist create a storyworld that is easily recognizable for readers. It is possible in this case to connect the storyworld closely to the sarcastic and sometimes satirical atmosphere that dominates most of the comic strips. The comic strips use two main strategies to convey a sense of criticism of systemic problems. On the visual level, figs. 7.1 and 7.5 show undefined places around the world which could be anywhere and draw on known iconic images regarding, for example, air pollution or the issue of ice melting. The generality on the one hand allows readers to combine the comic strips' panels into one holistic mental model of 'the world', while on the other hand it allows them to enrich this mental model with their own experiences of the actual world. The other strategy to convey criticism on level of the storyworld happens largely through characters' conversations, where readers are invited to create mental models of the situation a character talks about – for example, in fig. 7.3, when Nemi talks about the planetary damages the boy's parents have contributed to. A twist at the end of the conversation might also, as in fig. 7.3, give the situation a new context, in which some aspect of what has been said and imagined becomes comical.

7.2 Different perspectives on environmental citizenship

The comic strips have different approaches to aspects of environmental citizenship, although all of them are satirical to some degree. The common theme

in all the comic strips analyzed here is that of humans exploiting the planet and other species. Several of the comic strips do not address aspects of environmental citizenship openly, but instead more indirectly through the implications they communicate through their punch lines.

Fig. 7.1 criticizes consumption behavior and can be read in relation to the concept of the ecological footprint. Almost the whole comic strip is used to tell the story of a cycle of evolution and decay on Earth, only for Nemi to justify the purchase of a product that is harmful to the environment, a can of hairspray. The only way she can justify buying the can to herself and her friend is to make up a story in which life on the planet cyclically evolves and decays, which leads Nemi to the conclusion that this cycle might be the point – and therefore, that her purchase is justifiable. The absurdity in her argument suggests the conclusion that there is in fact no justification for purchasing a product that is harmful to the planet. Thus, the punch line also communicates a certain self-mockery on Nemi's part. While she is conscious of the problems caused by human behavior, she also does not want to abstain from using hairspray in her everyday life. As a consequence, she goes out of her way to make up an excuse for her purchase. This is an example of the cognitive dissonance readers might also recognize from the actual world, where the wider public and the political world are aware of the problems at hand, but most people's and countries' behavior does not reflect that awareness.

Fig. 7.2 criticizes anthropocentrism and names it as the reason why Nemi thinks humans will not be able to solve environmental problems, when she says that "we don't like to focus on anything but ourselves for too long" (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 2).[64] She says that thinking in an environmentally friendly way is more a question of a trend than one of an honest concern for people, which implies that in Nemi's opinion, humanity lacks seriousness when it comes to counteracting environmental problems. In addition to this lack of seriousness, she also thinks humans quickly "fall back into old habits" (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 1),[65] which is another reason why she does not believe humans will seriously become more environmentally aware. What Nemi expresses here is one of the main points of criticism that many climate activists also address, namely that humans are not changing their environmental behavior even in the face of crisis. Cyan's confusion

[64] [Norwegian original: «vi liker ikke å fokusere lenge av gangen på annet enn oss selv» (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 2).]

[65] [Norwegian original: «vender tilbake til gamle vaner» (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 1).]

regarding an earlier statement from Nemi that she made before the beginning of the comic strip that "it will go fine with Earth" (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 3)[66] uncovers a misunderstanding between the friends. While Cyan assumed that her friend meant 'it will go fine *with humans* on Earth', Nemi explains that what she really meant was that it will go fine with Earth, regardless of humans: "It [Earth – B. H.] will just create a new pest or two. And get us out of the way. Maybe" (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 3).[67] With her statement, Nemi underlines that the evaluation of the planet's state as "good" or "bad", "healthy" or "unhealthy" is an anthropocentric evaluation of the environmental situation. Nemi's attitude toward humans, or rather her concern for the environment, manifests itself in the last panel, in which her friend remarks that she apparently meant "'good' in a very relative sense" (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 4),[68] to which Nemi replies "I'm relatively positive" (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 4).[69] This exemplifies one of Derek Bell's (2005) starting points; he argues that one of the fundamental shifts that needs to take place is for humans not to conceive of nature as property. With her statement, Nemi inverts the idea of nature as property and makes clear that ultimately, it is humans who need nature, not the other way around. At the same time, Nemi's assumption that Earth might possibly create a plague to dispose of humans recalls Michel Serres (2011), who defines human behavior as 'parasitic'. Nemi's comment implies that humans are a disease, from the planet's perspective, which is not that dissimilar from the thought of humans as parasites. However, while Serres takes this as the starting point to argue for his concept of the 'natural contract' that would allow humans and other species to coexist as equals, Nemi argues that humanity's parasitic behavior might lead to its extinction.

Fig. 7.3 focuses most strongly on questions of intergenerational justice by comparing the boy's misdoing of breaking a vase with the parents' misdoings of contributing to the planet's destruction. While the boy's action is punished right away, the parents' actions are not punished at all. On the one hand, it seems like an exaggeration to compare the two situations, and this is also the comic strip's punch line. On the other hand, however, the boy's punishment can appear as exaggerated if one keeps in mind that breaking a vase is not as destructive as

[66] [Norwegian original: «det ville gå bra med Jorda» (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 3).]

[67] [Norwegian original: «Den [Jorda – B. H.] lager bare en ny pest eller to. Og rydder oss av veien. Kanskje.» (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 3).]

[68] [Norwegian original: «'bra' på en veldig relativ måte» (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 4).]

[69] [Norwegian original: «Jeg er relativt positiv» (Myhre, 2010, p. 7, panel 4).]

contributing to the planet's decay. This is an example of how Nemi's behavior does not conform to general norms. While her comparison between breaking a vase and being grounded for it and 'breaking the planet' without being punished creates a comical effect, it simultaneously addresses an environmental issue on a higher level. Although Nemi does not talk to the parents directly, she does speak out against the imbalance she perceives in the situation. This behavior can be interpreted as a case of scrutinizing underlying structures, which John Barry (2006) defines as one of the characteristics of his model of 'critical sustainability citizenship'. Although Nemi's argument is exaggerated in the situation depicted in the comic strip, it does reveal a disproportion in how humans commonly treat misbehaving of different kinds.

Fig. 7.4 consists, as discussed in the previous section, of a letter that Nemi writes to the Norwegian population registry, combined with pictures of Nemi writing and sending the letter.

> [1] To the population registry in Oslo. After having watched yesterday's episode of "State of the Realm", I hereby want to renounce my title as "human". I do no longer wish to per definition belong to the same race that breeds, bestially[70] tortures and kills other animals for personal economic profit. [2] It amazes me that Norwegians today feign incomprehension towards the Second World War, concentration camps, and the millions who suffered and died there. Don't you see the parallels to fur breeders, buyers of fur, and the passive masses who witness all of it? "Just animals", you say. Beings that can feel happiness, pain, and fear should in my opinion not be slaughtered even if they cannot solve a crossword puzzle in Dagbladet. Small human children can't do that, either. Where is the respect for life… [3] Greet the tax office and tell them they will never get a single kroner from me anymore. I refuse to pay taxes and support a country that allows fur breeding. Norwegian politicians are owned by the votes of a condemnable race that generally is for all madness as long as they never need to look a fox in the eyes, but can buy its fur in nice plastic packaging. I am dizzy with rage. [4] Please find enclosed my driver's license, passport, and other from

[70] Considering that Nemi's letter problematizes the exploitative relationship between humans and nonhumans and underlines the capability of animals to feel emotions, the use of the word "bestially" leads to a certain ambivalence, since the comparison to animals that it is being made here has a clearly negative note to it.

> now on invalid identity documents. I want from now on to be classified as "dog" or another being that doesn't exercise systematic torture. Should you wish to discuss this further, you will not get anything out of me apart from this: "Woof!" Nemi Montoya. (Myhre, 2009, p. 28, panels 1–4)[71]

As mentioned earlier, this comic strip shows Nemi's reaction to what she has watched on TV, which on the one hand creates a comical effect, given that the letter ends with the word "Woof". On the other hand, her reaction appears to be very consequent in its extremeness. Her renunciation of the title "human" mirrors the amount of rage expressed in the letter. This is also underlined by her comparison between fur breeding and concentration camps, which she evaluates as similarly cruel. While the comic strip uses exaggeration as its main stylistic device here, Nemi's behavior also scrutinizes something she has witnessed about her country. By sending her identity documents to the population registry and renouncing her membership of the human race, she displays (albeit comically exaggerated) behavior that can be termed nonviolent civil disobedience, which points to a central aspect of 'critical sustainability citizenship' formulated by John Barry (2006). While her approach to the problem consists of wanting to decline further association with the state she lives in and the species she is a part of, she does address a problematic issue she has learned about in front of state institutions. And while she denies them the possibility of discussing these issues with her further, she addresses the problem she is mad about on an individual as well as a

[71] [Norwegian original: «[1] Til folkeregisteret i Oslo. Etter å ha sett gårsdagens episode av «Rikets Tilstand,» vil jeg med dette frasi meg min tittel som «menneske». Jeg ønsker ikke lenger å pr. definisjon tilhøre en rase som avler, bestialsk torturerer og dreper andre dyr for personlig økonomisk vinning. [2] Det forbauser meg at nordmenn i dag stiller seg uforstående til Andre Verdenskrig, konsentrasjonsleierne og de millioner som der led og døde. Ser dere ikke parallellene til pelsoppdretterne, kjøperne av pels og de passive massene som bivåner det hele? «Bare dyr,» sier dere. Vesener som kan føle glede, smerte og frykt burde etter min mening ikke slaktes ned selv om de ikke kan løse kryssordet i Dagbladet. Små menneskebarn kan heller ikke det. Hvor er respekten for livet … [3] Hils likningskontoret og si at de aldri mer vil motta én krone fra meg. Jeg nekter å betale skatt og støtte et land som tillater pelsoppdrett. Norges politikere eies av stemmene til en forkastelig rase som generelt er for all galskapen så lenge de aldri behøver å se en rev inn i øynene, men kan kjøpe pelsen deres i en pen emballasje av plast. Jeg er svimmel av sinne. [4] Vedlagt finner dere mitt førerkort, pass og andre fra nå av ugyldige identifikasjonspapirer. Jeg vil herved klassifiseres som «hund» eller et annet vesen som ikke utøver systematisk tortur. Skulle dere ønske å diskutere dette nærmere, vil dere få intet annet ut av meg enn dette: «Voff!» Nemi Montoya» (Myhre, 2009, p. 28, panels 1–4).]

structural level because, with her reaction as an individual, she nonetheless addresses the structural side – the state – in her letter.

While Nemi's reaction can be considered non-constructive since she is not willing to engage in discussion, it addresses a structural issue, namely that of animal rights, outright. Who belongs to the community of citizens and who does not is a point of contention in approaches to environmental citizenship. Latour (2004) argues for a redefinition of who belongs to a community – or in Latour's words, to the collective – that includes nonhumans. While Nemi does not address this issue directly, her letter problematizes the differentiation humans draw between how we treat humans and how we treat nonhumans. She emphasizes the issue that "[b]eings that can feel happiness, pain, and fear should in my [Nemi's – B. H.] opinion not be slaughtered even if they cannot solve a crossword puzzle" (Myhre, 2009, p. 28, panel 3)[72]. This is a point that Latour also raises when he suggests establishing spokespersons for nonhumans to enable communication across species (Latour, 2004, p. 65). At the same time, the comic strip exemplifies something that is true for Nemi as a character on a more general level. While she has strong political and ethical opinions, Nemi acts and reacts in a highly individualistic way and does not organize politically. Her reaction here is motivated by feelings of injustice and, acting as an individual, she takes matters into her own hands and makes the political decision to send back her identification documents, thus showing her disagreement with a structural issue she sees in a satirically exaggerated way.

In fig. 7.5, the pictures convey a strong sense of deep conflict and a parasitic behavior of humans, especially in combination with the verbal text. Panel eight in the story exemplifies this. It contrasts the dying frog's question of why the scorpion has stung him with a person who sits in a dried landscape and is in danger of dying from hunger and thirst. The panel emphasizes that humans are not only destroying the planet and other species, but also themselves, which parallels the fact that the scorpion ultimately induces its own death by stinging the frog. In the comic strip, the interplay between verbal text and pictures creates tension between the two modalities that underlines how twisted the assumed logic of the scorpion is when it is transferred to humans. The behavior depicted in the comic strip hints at the starting point from which French philosopher Michel Serres (2011) chooses to

[72] [Norwegian original: «Vesener som kan føle glede, smerte og frykt burde etter min [Nemis – B. H.] mening ikke slaktes ned selv om de ikke kan løse kryssordet» (Myhre, 2009, p. 28, panel 3).]

make an argument for the establishment of a ‘natural contract’. This concept would, as Serres argues, serve to create an equilibrium by giving nature and all animals the status of legal subjects instead of objects, so that they would in fact be treated as equals. By signing a ‘natural contract’ along the lines of the social contract, humanity would be able to end its war against nature and establish a peaceful relationship with the planet. While the comic strip does not show what this truly equal world that Serres argues for would look like, it does illustrate the fundamental problems the planet has because of the inequality between humans and all other life forms.

Most of the comic strips discussed in this chapter mainly criticize the status quo concerning different aspects of environmental problems: for example, intergenerational justice (fig. 7.3), an anthropocentric worldview (fig. 7.2), or the exploitation of other species (fig. 7.4). While the comic strips do not suggest concrete solutions, they contain an invitation for readers to scrutinize some of the things shown in the short narratives. But in this invitation to scrutinize what is being criticized in the comic strips, there lie some aspects of environmental citizenship. The comic strips invite readers to think about what is being criticized and, in some instances, their own conduct is potentially being exposed as well, which might lead to some discomfort.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, all regular issues of *Nemi* contain one or several nonfiction texts about the general topic of the issue, which contextualizes the comic strips presented to readers. In the special issue about the environment, the nonfiction texts concern recycling and the Norwegian state’s climate action “klimaløftet”, which was established in 2007 and ran until 2014. “Klimaløftet” was an effort on the part of the Norwegian state to inform the public about, for example, the state of the climate, and national initiatives regarding climate protection (“klimaløftet”, n.d.). Three of the four short texts concern ideas about changing one’s individual behavior to use less energy in everyday life. One text suggests asking politicians about their works. In other words, the nonfiction texts contain a combination of individual and structural changes, with a stronger focus on individual actions. The actions suggested in the texts all point to reducing one’s carbon footprint. Foregrounding the importance of using less energy as an individual hints at the ideas formulated by Andrew Dobson (2003) in his model of ‘ecological citizenship’. The overall approach of the nonfiction texts to environmental citizenship is more of a liberal one, although the comic strips

themselves display, as I have argued in this section, a more varied approach to aspects of environmental citizenship.

7.3 What lies behind the punch lines

As is typical of satirical comic strips such as *Nemi*, they contain more criticism of the status quo in society than approaches to solving the problems that they criticize. There is didactic potential in this criticism because the comic strips invite readers to think about what is being criticized, on what grounds, and in what manner. These factors open the comic strips up and invite readers to go deeper into the topics discussed in the short narratives. Readers can make connections between why the comic strips might be funny and what lies behind the punch lines. In his entry about satire in the *Encyclopedia of Humor Studies*, Conal Condren (2014) writes that "[f]rom classical antiquity into the early modern Western world, the provocation of laughter had the critical purpose of exposing moral, social, and intellectual failings" (p. 661). The case of *Nemi* shows how laughter is used to expose injustice and failings on a sociopolitical level. Furthermore, the comic strips display humor as "the attempt to expose in order to reform" (Condren, 2014, p. 662). In other words, the comic strips' didactic potential often lies in their satirical qualities because they attempt to make readers laugh and subsequently think about why they are laughing. Thus, they challenge readers to uncover for themselves the different layers of the issues the comic strips address. This can also encourage readers to form a view on the issues the comic strips take up. The self-mockery that lies in the comic strips also challenges readers, in that it denies the possibility of an unambiguous interpretation of the topics that are addressed. Both the satire and the self-mockery create gaps which readers are invited to fill out with their own thoughts about the ambiguous opinions that the comic strips provide.

The main character herself stands out as an individualist. Her reactions to the situations she experiences are often either sarcastic or emotional, and although she is a politically engaged character, she acts and reacts as an individual, not in a politically organized context. Considering that the main audience for *Nemi* consists of young adult and adult readers, her behavior might reflect some of her reading audience's opinions. This factor makes Nemi a potentially highly relatable character for readers, and it can facilitate understanding of some of the issues addressed in the comic strips.

Fig. 7.4 stands out from the other examples because it relates to something specific in the actual world. Nemi's reaction to the TV program invites readers to connect the comic strips to the actual world, sometimes even transcending the realm of the storyworld. In fig. 7.4, an invitation to think further and relate these thoughts to the actual world is written out much more clearly than in the other examples from the series that I discuss. This shows that while the series generally invites readers to make connections between the storyworld and the actual world, *Nemi* also discusses specific cultural moments that have a potential impact on society (such as a TV program) and that the protagonist furthermore does not hold back with her opinion on. Quite the contrary: in this example, as in the others, Nemi formulates her controversial opinion quite clearly, thus inviting readers to form their own opinion and agree or disagree with what she says.

The nonfiction texts in the *Nemi* issues contextualize the comic strips and put them into a shared thematic context. As has become clear through my analysis of the examples in this chapter, as well as through the topics of the nonfiction texts, the special issue mostly focuses on human behavior on the planet and on humans' relationship to the world they inhabit. The issue was specifically intended for use in schools with students between the ages of 13 and 16 (Stiftelsen for kildesortering og gjenvinning LOOP, 2010), which means that a lot of the underlying problems addressed by the comic strips might be discussed in more detail in the context of the classroom. In addition to offering suggestions for living in a more environmentally friendly way, the nonfiction texts also provide information about, for example, how beverage cans are recycled. However, the nonfiction texts in the special issue do not provide the same variety of approaches to environmental citizenship that is found in the comic strips themselves.

The comic strips address a variety of issues connected to aspects of environmental citizenship, such as overconsumption, animal welfare, and intergenerational justice. On the one hand, the combination of these topics in the special issue makes it possible to take up this variety of themes in an educational context. It also became clear that many different aspects of environmental citizenship can be traced in the comic strips. On the other hand, these very different aspects go in various directions and remain somewhat vague, which can make it difficult for readers to draw conclusions, and therefore the comic strips might leave them confused. Furthermore, several of the examples I discussed here can be read as suggesting that the underlying problem is human nature. This would possibly imply that there is not much that can be done about environmental problems

because more environmentally friendly behavior would go against human nature. From a didactic perspective, this conclusion creates a possible difficulty for a discussion of *Nemi* in an educational context.

7.4 Conclusion

The comic strips I discussed in this chapter use similar stylistic devices typical of newspaper strips to highlight different problems when it comes to the topic of climate change and environmental pollution. Through the main character, the comic strips also show various aspects of environmental citizenship. While they mainly criticize the status quo, they use humor, mainly created through their punch lines, to address different issues connected to environmental problems. As is typical for satirical works, they invite readers to think further about what is being criticized.

In terms of environmental citizenship, the comic strips I analyzed in this chapter show a variety of approaches to different aspects of environmental citizenship, ranging from liberal and republican to philosophical views. What all the comic strips have in common is that they formulate these approaches in an indirect way and do not necessarily commit to one view in one narrative. An example of this is fig. 7.4, in which both ideas prevalent in 'critical sustainability citizenship' (Barry, 2006) and in *Politics of Nature* (Latour, 2004) can be found. The comic strips' openness in that regard enables readers to discuss various views on some of the issues taken up in these works. At the same time, this can also make an interpretation of the comic strips difficult for readers because the stories remain ambiguous in their conclusions. Furthermore, some of the comic strips I analyzed might lead to a pessimistic perspective that might impede, rather than open up, possibilities for action in readers' minds.

Nemi is an example of how short multimodal narratives can create a storyworld that is recognizable for readers. Because of the comic strips' shortness, they take up the issues they address in a condensed manner, using stylistic devices such as exaggerations and iconic images that might trigger certain images in readers' heads. Thus, readers are invited to connect what they read to the actual world. It was clear in some of the comic strips that the gutter is a centrally important narrative device that allows readers to connect individual panels with each other. The surprising and satirical turns of the comic strips can potentially engage readers and invite them to think about questions that the stories depict as

centrally important when it comes to the relationship humans have to the world they inhabit. Furthermore, readers are also invited to connect the comic strips to the actual world.

8 Walt Disney's *Donald Duck*

Donald Duck is arguably the most famous character from the Disney universe after Mickey Mouse. In Norway, the first edition of *Donald Duck & Co.* was published in 1948 (Holen, 2012, p. 17) and featured Donald as a fireman. Øyvind Holen (2012) calls the Disney comics "the most important form of entertainment for children and young adults for several decades"[73] (pp. 41–42, my translation) in Norway and Scandinavia. Birkeland, Risa, et al. (2018) write that *Donald Duck & Co.* has given the character an "unmatched success among all cartoon characters in Norway"[74] (p. 172, my translation). Numerous artists have created stories about the notoriously angry duck, although the most influential of those artists was Carl Barks, who worked as a cartoonist for *Donald Duck* mainly between 1943 and 1966. Barks was also the creator of Duckburg, a fictional city located in the equally fictional state of Calisota (a combination of California and Minnesota), where Donald and many of the characters who feature in the stories about him live (Holen, 2012, pp. 27–28). He created characters such as Donald's uncle Scrooge McDuck, and his nephews Huey, Dewey, and Louie (Andrae, 2006, p. 84), who appear in the stories I examine in this chapter.

Donald Duck is characterized by a recognizable drawing style, especially from Barks's time onwards. Most of the characters appearing in the comics are anthropomorphized animals, and the reoccurring ones have some defining characteristics to their appearances. For instance, Donald usually wears a sailor blouse and hat, Uncle Scrooge wears a top hat, a red jacket, and spats, and Donald's nephews wear either baseball caps and black sweaters, or their Junior Woodchuck uniforms. In addition to their visual style, the characters of the *Donald Duck* universe also have specific character traits, such as Uncle Scrooge's greed, or Donald's short temper and notorious bad luck. These factors make them easily recognizable for readers, even though the different *Donald Duck* stories are not connected to each other in any way. Rather, *Donald Duck* generally tells individual local stories that are set in a global storyworld, centered around Duckburg. Oftentimes, Donald's temper and bad luck cause humoristic situations and it is first and foremost the dynamic between the characters that drives the plot forward and

[73] [Norwegian original: «… den viktigste formen for barne- og ungdomsunderholdning i flere tiår» (Holen, 2012, pp. 41-42).]

[74] [Norwegian original: « … en uovertruffen suksess blant samtlige seriefigurer i Norge» (Holen, 2012, p. 172).]

brings Donald into tricky situations. *Donald Duck* comics often employ stereotypes as a stylistic device to create humor. Additionally, the stereotypical depiction of many of the characters helps to make them, and especially their goals, easily recognizable for readers.

While *Donald Duck* has not been examined extensively when it comes to its environmental aspects, some of the central characters do seem to have a specific connection to the environment. In this context, Øyvind Holen (2012) specifically points to the contrast between Uncle Scrooge and the more environmentally aware Junior Woodchucks, who tend to advocate for more responsible behavior toward the environment (p. 205). Therefore, my analysis does not solely focus on Donald himself, but I also consider Uncle Scrooge and the Junior Woodchucks as central characters in the overall *Donald Duck* storyworld who are especially important when it comes to environmental questions. In this chapter, my analysis of *Donald Duck* focuses on three Norwegian stories written by Terje Nordberg and illustrated by Arild Midthun, the only certified Norwegian cartoonist for *Donald Duck* (Gisle & Holen, 2021), published between 2009 and 2011. Given this thesis's focus on Norwegian literature, and given the central role *Donald Duck* played within Norwegian popular culture especially until the 1980s, it seems natural to include these three stories by a Norwegian author and cartoonist in the selection of texts to be analyzed, even though the overall *Donald Duck* storyworld mainly originates from a US cultural context.

8.1 The changeable environment of Duckburg

Although "Duckburg […] changes from story to story and has contradictory sets of characteristics" (Andrae, 2006, p. 106), it also is a recognizable place for readers as Donald's home and often the location of the stories. Similarly, although "we know nothing of Donald's past" (Andrae, 2006, p. 105), he remains a recognizable character, even though he often has different jobs or talents that only appear in single stories. Therefore, readers often have to make use of Walton's 'principle of charity', by means of which they can accept conflicts and contradictions in narratives to avoid impeding their reading experience (Thon, 2019, p. 76) when mentally constructing the storyworld of individual *Donald Duck* stories. At the same time, Duckburg, as the general setting of many stories, remains largely the same, at least in terms of certain places and features, such as Uncle Scrooge's

Money Bin, or the houses where other characters like Gyro Gearloose or Donald live.

In this section, I discuss the storyworlds of the three stories that form the basis of this chapter one after another. All three stories – two Donald Duck stories and one Uncle Scrooge story –take place in or near Duckburg. *Fighting Nature with Nature* is located in the city and features Donald and his nephews as the main characters. Readers find themselves in an environment they know from many other stories, mainly in and around Donald's home. In this story, Duckburg suffers from a mosquito plague. In the beginning, Donald buys a book on how to fight nature with natural means from a professor with a sales booth (fig. 8.1). To get rid of the mosquitoes, Donald starts to collect frogs that eat the insects. This strategy turns out to be successful, and soon the citizens of Duckburg start buying frogs from Donald to get rid of the mosquitoes. It quickly turns out, however, that the frogs have become a new plague for the citizens, so Donald tries to fix the situation by introducing frog-eating snakes to the city. As these turn out to be a plague as well, Donald buys vultures that are supposed to eat the snakes, but also turn out to be a plague. In the end, the only thing that helps against the vultures are mosquitoes, leading to the same situation as in the beginning of the story. This comic takes up many known characteristics and situations about Donald and his life. In this sense, the story is quite typical of a *Donald Duck* comic and does not feature many exceptional elements. As it often is the case, Donald quickly gets hooked on the idea of fixing a situation in a supposedly easy and in this case even seemingly environmentally friendly way. However, it turns out equally quickly that Donald is not able to maintain moderation and, therefore, things get out of hand.

When Donald has the idea of catching frogs early in the story, it becomes apparent that environmental pollution is not unknown in Duckburg. When he is on the dam with his nephews, several of the panels show waste lying on the ground, and after Donald steps on an accordion, he even comments on the waste situation. However, the environmental pollution on the dam has no further importance for the story, and the scene on the dam functions as a moment of comic relief in which Donald tries to sneak up on the frogs, then fails because he steps on an accordion, but ultimately succeeds in attracting the frogs after all because of the instrument's sounds. Interestingly, the pollution actually helps Donald to catch the frogs in the end. So in this case, the environmental pollution is mainly depicted to facilitate a joke, rather than to make readers aware of an environmental problem. And while Donald is irritated by the waste lying on the ground, he ultimately benefits from it.

The escalating situation in the city that is the main plot in the story first and foremost creates funny situations in which Donald is punished for his unthinking behavior. However, the story also displays a highly active fauna that influences the storyworld in form of the animals that Donald imports to the city. The animals do not conform to Donald's ideas but instead act according to their instincts, and they dominate life in the city more and more, eventually scaring away the citizens. So, while the focus lies on how Donald is punished because of his greed and lack of reflection on the consequences of his actions, it is an environmental problem that needs to be solved in the story. Its solution ultimately lies in the reestablishment of a natural balance, which turns out to be the same situation as prevailed in the beginning. There is very little use of a narrative voice in the story, and it mainly functions as an indicator for how much time has passed at different points in the story. Here, the gutter comes in as an important stylistic device because readers are free to imagine what happens between the panels in the cases where the narrative voice indicates that some time has passed. On some occasions, the passing of time between two panels also coincides with turning to the next page, which can be interpreted as an emphasis on the time elapsed. Until readers learn more about how the situation has developed, they are invited to supply information by reverting to their knowledge of the actual world as well as of other *Donald Duck* stories, thus employing the 'principle of minimal departure' (Ryan, 1991). Verbally, the comic mostly uses direct speech between the characters, as well as thought balloons that mostly contain questions or exclamation marks, and words that mimic the sounds that the different animals make. A typical feature that is employed in this story is that Donald's nephews often share one speech balloon that has three tails, indicating that the boys speak in unison. This lets them appear as a unity that tries to dampen Donald's unreflecting behavior.

In *The Car of the Future*, Donald takes a trip with his nephews. They eventually collide with a traffic sign warning about "wild cars", and Donald explains the background in a story. In an embedded narrative, he tells his nephews how the previous summer, he had decided to invent a car motor that could be powered by fuels other than gas, to avoid paying the high prices for gas at that time. Attempting to invent a new fuel at home, Donald eventually destroys his car, so while Huey, Dewey, and Louie are at camp later in the story, Donald and Gyro Gearloose go to a farm to work on Donald's idea. Eventually, Gyro manages to construct a type of car that runs on grass. To make the process of refueling these new cars easier, Gyro installs a brain and teeth into the machines, thus transforming

them into sentient beings. When he and Donald later want to sell their idea to car producers, however, the cars bolt because they resist being driven by one of the car producers. As the plot turns back to the frame story, readers learn that these cars now run free, which is why a warning sign has been installed.

The embedded narrative starts when Donald's nephews remember how frustrated their uncle was the previous summer because of the high gas prices at the time. The beginning of the framed narrative is marked visually, with Donald's head on the left side of the first panel of the embedded narrative. This panel also has a rounded edge, reminiscent of a thought balloon, to signal that readers are now being invited to perform a deictic shift and enter Donald's memory. In this case, the deictic shift readers are invited to perform also coincides with the story's 'push' to a deeper narrative level (Stockwell, 2002).

As mentioned, Donald's initial motivation to invent a new fuel is driven by his reluctance to pay the high gas prices. His first attempts at inventing a new fuel at home go terribly wrong, and after poisoning himself by trying to use disinfectant as fuel, Donald decides that "the future's fuel doesn't only have to be cheap. It must also be environmentally friendly and harmless for people and animals" (Nordberg, 2011, p. 36, panel 8).[75] However, his approach to that idea turns out to be ill thought-out, since he starts mixing spices into the gas tank of his car, which ends with the motor exploding. Huey, Dewey, and Louie realize even before Donald poisons himself that his idea of inventing a new fuel is not thought through, and they try to discourage him from his endeavor. Here, the three boys sometimes share one speech balloon, and sometimes they continue and finish each other's sentences, another typical trait of theirs. However, their warnings and doubts are ignored by Donald. This is also a typical trait for *Donald Duck*, so readers are confronted with a familiar dynamic between the characters in this story. Here, readers might also be able to anticipate that Donald's idea of inventing a new fuel will not turn out well, since his nephews, who are usually right in the end, are skeptical and scrutinize their uncle's idea early on.

As Donald first presents his idea to Gyro Gearloose, it becomes clear that in this story, the characters have quite some impact on the environment, meaning that they can manipulate and change it considerably. As Donald arrives, Gyro is working on a device that can extract humidity from other places and objects – e.g.,

[75] [Norwegian original; «framtidens drivstoff ikke bare må være billig. Den må også være miljøvennlig og harmløst for folk og fe» (Nordberg, 2011, p. 36, panel 8).]

plants or the air – to create clouds and possibly rain. While this can be seen as an environmentally important invention, the focus in this situation lies on the fact that Donald disturbs Gyro and throws away his device, so that Gyro does not get to see whether his invention works. Here, Donald appears as an inconsiderate character because he is so hung up on his own idea, and the environmental problem Gyro is working on functions as a humorous comment in the background.

The story takes place in and near Duckburg, although the location of the farm where Donald and Gyro work on their invention is not defined. Readers are invited to add complementary details about the farm, since the only important fact about it that readers are given by the story is the fact that Donald and Gyro go there to work without being disturbed. This is an example of what Marie-Laure Ryan (1991) writes regarding the 'principle of minimal departure'. Everything readers need to know is supplied by the text, in this case the fact that the farm has a barn that is used as a workshop, meadows around the house, and a paddock in which the sentient cars graze later in the story. Other details, like the farm's exact location or what the inside of the farmhouse might look like, are not central to the story, and readers might use their knowledge from the actual world or from other stories from the *Donald Duck* universe to anchor the farm in their imagination.

As Donald and Gyro work to invent a motor that runs on grass, the depiction of the environment becomes more important to the story. While Gyro appears to be quite satisfied with his invention and explains to Donald how the new car works, Donald notices that the car's emissions smell bad, and that the car also produces small balls of organic waste (fig. 8.2). In contrast to regular cars, the pollution that the new car produces is rendered visible and calls forth a negative reaction from Donald. He also realizes that supplying the car with enough grass is a lot of manual labor, for which a solution is seemingly found when Gyro and Donald supply the car with brains and teeth, so it can feed itself (fig. 8.3). This situation is an example of Ryan's notion that storyworlds do not have to be logical, and it shows at the same time that readers make use of what Kendall Walton (1990) calls 'make-believe'. Readers of the story most probably know that it is physically impossible to implant a brain into a car and thus make it into a machine-animal hybrid. However, in the context of the storyworld of *Donald Duck*, this action is possible because the storyworld does not always follow realistic rules (in fact, many of Gyro's inventions would not work in the actual world). However, the short-termism of both Donald and Gyro quickly becomes clear when one of the car producers whom Donald and Gyro want to show their invention to tries to start one

of the cars, and the car shakes him off and goes wild. As the story 'pops' back to the frame narrative, readers learn that the cars now roam freely in the countryside, which is why the warning sign Donald and his nephews collided with in the beginning has been installed.

The Mermaid Man takes place in Duckburg Bay, where in the beginning, Donald, Uncle Scrooge, and an environmental protection inspector are on a boat. In this story, Donald dives into the ocean for his uncle to check on a clogged waste pipe and unclog it, so that Uncle Scrooge can avoid paying fees for a more environmentally friendly way to dispose of his waste onshore. While he is underwater, Donald gets attacked by a shark and passes out. As he regains his consciousness, Donald finds himself in a community of mermaids who need his help to clog the pipe that is polluting their environment. Donald eventually manages to clog the pipe by accident and is invited home by one of the mermaids. When he realizes that she has been exploiting him, Donald starts screaming and suddenly finds himself back with his uncle and the environmental protection inspector, unsure whether he has been dreaming about the mermaid community or not.

In the beginning of the story, the environmental protection inspector who accompanies the two informs Donald that untreated waste that is dumped into the ocean contains hormonal substances that can have unforeseeable consequences for marine life. As Donald dives to the sea bed, he notices that the fish and crustaceans have indeed mutated, and wonders whether that has something to do with what the inspector was talking about. Readers are here invited to make a connection between the information from the environmental protection inspector and the situation that Donald observes underwater. The mutated animals serve as a comment on the seriousness of the pollution most probably coming from the waste pipe, while they add a humorous note to the background at the same time.

Donald soon finds the pipe, which has a diameter about twice the size of himself (fig. 8.4). As he investigates the situation, Donald is attacked by a three-eyed shark and passes out. The narrative does not give any information about how much time passes before Donald wakes up again and finds himself in a mermaid community, in need of help. Here, it is even possible to infer that Donald might be dreaming, because he is shocked at the sight of a mermaid who starts talking to him, especially considering that Donald later seems to pass out again, only to awaken back on the boat with his uncle and the inspector. The whole episode in the mermaid community is thus retrospectively influenced by an element of

uncertainty that only gets clarified in the very last panel of the story, where the mermaid Donald talks to waves at the retreating boat. Donald's passing out means a possible 'push' to a deeper narrative level (e.g., a dream), but for the most part of the story, readers are left in doubt about the narrative situation.

The storyworld in *The Mermaid Man* combines some of the typical features of *Donald Duck* stories with some more fantastical aspects that are less often part of *Donald Duck* comics. As is typical for stories where Donald is the protagonist, he is haunted by bad luck and other people take advantage of him. In this case, both aspects lead to a positive outcome for the environment. The mermaid community is a more fantastical, even fabulous, element and sets the story apart from the other two examples analyzed here. The depiction of the mermaids is quite stereotypical and evokes some cultural and intermedial references. For example, as the mermaid tells Donald that she and her people do not want outsiders to know about their existence, the corresponding panel shows a figure in an ancient diving suit with a beret on his helmet, drawing a mermaid. The mermaid's position in the artist's drawing strongly resembles Edvard Eriksen's statue *The Little Mermaid* from 1913, which is in Copenhagen. This reference can be read as directed especially at Scandinavian readers, since it can be assumed that they are familiar with the statue in the Danish capital. The mermaid herself is also an intermedial reference. Her general appearance and especially her hairstyle are reminiscent of Ariel from the Disney animated movie *The Little Mermaid* from 1989 (fig. 8.5). Both references add humor to the story and invite readers to draw connections to other associations they might have with mermaids. Furthermore, the reference to Eriksen's statue is an invitation to build a connection between the comic's storyworld and the actual world, while the reference to the Disney movie might invite readers to make assumptions about the female mermaid's character, based on her similarity with Ariel.

The different stories underline how changeable Duckburg and its surroundings are, and that the individual stories about the Duck family are smaller, unconnected units that take place in the same global storyworld. Readers are invited to use both their knowledge of the actual world and their knowledge about *Donald Duck* stories to model holistic storyworlds while reading. Different reader expectations are activated in the stories, depending on which characters play the central roles in the different comics. This can be understood as pointing back to the notion of scripts (Herman, 2002) because readers familiar with the global storyworld of *Donald Duck* can expect certain plot dynamics to unfold based on

past experiences they have had with other stories taking place in this storyworld. Even though the characters themselves are changeable to some degree, their main character traits remain the same throughout all the stories, so that the comics can employ them as a base for the development of the plot. The examples I discuss in this chapter display environmental themes in different ways, and therefore, their impact on the local storyworlds varies. Generally speaking, environmental elements have a humoristic function that is seen either in the background, as with the mutated sea animals, or in the foreground, as when Donald comments that "people leave their trash wherever they go!" (Nordberg, 2010, p. 151, panel 6).[76] Furthermore, it is clear that the characters have differing views on the environment, which are influenced by various factors such as money, a consideration for natural processes and the well-being of animals – or a lack thereof. These contrasts often lead to funny situations in which the characters (usually Donald) either lose control over a situation, or where they are eventually pressured to change their behavior to make things right again.

8.2 Taking up environmental citizenship implicitly

Since the storyworld of *Donald Duck* is extremely varied, it is important to note that while Donald acts in an environmentally friendly way in some stories, he displays the opposite behavior in other stories. When Donald does display environmentally friendly behavior, it either seems to be unintended or it does not happen out of concern for the environment, but for other reasons. Unlike in other texts I analyze in my project, *Donald Duck* is not a decidedly environmentally engaged character, as Nemi or Blekkulf are, for example.

In *Fighting Nature with Nature*, Donald intends to behave in an environmentally friendly way by using knowledge from the professor's book instead of poison. However, as soon as he succeeds in exterminating the mosquitoes with the frogs he caught, Donald starts to capitalize on nature and sells the animals to other citizens. Even though he avoids using poison, it turns out that he views nature as something he can use to reach a goal, a means to an end that he can buy and sell, as he keeps on importing new animals to handle the new problems he has himself created. In this sense, he displays the typical behavior that is criticized in theories about environmental citizenship, a detachment from the

[76] [Norwegian original: «Folk kaster søppelet sitt hvor de skal være!» (Nordberg, 2010, p. 151, panel 6).]

environment that Derek Bell (2005) calls "environmentally dangerous" (p. 183). What Donald has to learn in this story is that nature in fact can not be used as he wishes, and that his excessive interferences with the environment in Duckburg do not go unpunished. With his unthinking actions, it might also be possible to understand Donald's behavior as what Michel Serres (2011) calls "parasitic" in the sense that "[t]he parasite would destroy the host without realizing it" (p. 36). In accordance with this argument, Donald does not seem to realize that his behavior has an environmentally harmful side, bringing ever new animals to Duckburg that turn out to be a plague for the citizens. On another note, Donald's strategy of selling the frogs as an environmentally friendly measure against the mosquitoes can be interpreted as not unlike greenwashing. While he does not use substances that are harmful to the environment, his way of handling the mosquito plague and the problematic consequences connected to it turn out to be harmful to the environment anyway. So, despite advertising that he can provide "the green way" (Nordberg, 2010, p. 153, panel 4)[77] to get rid of the mosquitoes "without poison" (Nordberg, 2010, p. 153, panel 4),[78] his solution is not as unproblematic and environmentally friendly as the people in Duckburg initially think.

It becomes clear in the course of the story that Donald is unable to change his mindset, which is why the situation in the city gets out of control. He ignores his nephews' repeated warnings to "beware of fiddling with nature" (Nordberg, 2010, p. 155, panel 8)[79] and naïvely puts his trust in what he reads in the book. Ultimately, Donald's trust in science is unthinking and lacks a respect for nature. Indeed, the fact that he does not actually care very much for the environment in this story is alluded to at the very beginning. As Donald buys the book from the professor, he throws away the poison he had previously bought to deal with the mosquitoes. While he is intrigued by the idea of not using poison on the insects, throwing away a full can of it betrays his behavior as unthinking even on the first page of the comic (fig. 8.1). His behavior and mindset also stand in contrast to Huey, Dewey, and Louie, who advocate for more reasonable conduct and for not viewing nature as property. Their attitude can be understood in connection with the view on the environment Simon Hailwood (2005) argues for, which is to respect nature's 'otherness'. Hailwood's argument that nature has an otherness that

[77] [Norwegian original: «den grønne måten» (Nordberg, 2010, p. 153, panel 4).]

[78] [Norwegian original: «ingen gift» (Nordberg, 2010, p. 153, panel 4).]

[79] [Norwegian original: «vokte seg for å tukle med naturen» (Nordberg, 2010, p. 155, panel 8).]

is valuable resonates with how Donald's nephews try to stop him from using the animals he imports to the city as a means to an end and for his own benefit. But much like Hailwood, the three boys do not go further from there, but highlight that Donald should not interfere with nature so much, disrespecting natural balances.

The comic does not display aspects of environmental citizenship in a way where any of the characters adjust their mindset to a more reflective and less environmentally harmful behavior. While Donald is forced to get rid of the vultures by importing mosquitoes, which are less dangerous to the citizens, and thus reestablishes the initial situation, this does not happen out of environmental concern. The story concentrates more on highlighting some of the dangers connected to disregarding natural proportions. Donald's nephews appear as the characters who have a fundamental respect for nature and who understand that nature is not something that can be bought, sold, and used as one wishes.

In *The Car of the Future*, aspects of environmental citizenship and pollution are related to the topic of fuel. Donald's initial motivation to invent a new fuel is driven by his unwillingness to pay high gas prices. However, after accidentally poisoning himself, Donald understands that he needs to invent an environmentally friendly new fuel. This implies that he is aware of the environmental problems that are connected to fossil fuels. Considering Donald's argument that a more environmentally friendly fuel is also something that other people will want, it can be assumed that pollution is a problem that the inhabitants of Duckburg experience. In an act of individual protest, Donald therefore seeks to invent a new kind of motor that would be independent of the gas market, and the thought that the new fuel should be environmentally friendly comes to his mind after he poisons himself. While Donald's approach to his task shows itself to be poorly thought out, and his nephews advocate for letting experts develop gas instead of trying it himself, he does have the civic community in mind because he not only wants to invent a fuel for himself, but for everyone. In a sense, Donald tries to find a solution for a problem he experiences that other people can also benefit from, so he tries to work for the common good, which is in its basic structure a republican ideal.

Later, as Donald and Gyro work on the farm and manage to invent a car that runs on grass, Donald quickly realizes that a more self-sustaining lifestyle also means more manual labor for him because the new cars must be refueled very frequently. In connection with this, Donald and Gyro have a short conversation about the question of how to fuel the cars. Donald asks Gyro, "why can't we just

fill it from a pump, as if it was a regular car?" (Nordberg, 2011, p. 41, panel 2),[80] and Gyro explains that "then it is just like with gas – we get a market that is exploited for profit at the expense of drivers all around the world" (Nordberg, 2011, p. 41, panel 2).[81] What Gyro's explanation implies is that the comfort of filling up the car with gas from a pump comes at a certain cost, and avoiding an exploitative market in this case means more manual labor for Donald. In this conversation, the mode of operation of the gas market is scrutinized, although this is not discussed with regard to environmental issues but with more of a focus on economic aspects. Still, Gyro critically addresses a structural issue, and it is clear that being independent of the gas market is one of the goals that he and Donald have with their invention. Keeping in mind that Donald also expresses that the new fuel should be environmentally friendly, their conversation is reminiscent of the attitude that John Barry (2006) sees as a central aspect of 'sustainability citizenship'. Constructing their own car that also does not need regular fuel can then be understood as an act of disobedience,[82] although this disobedience does not concern the state as much as the industry. It might therefore be possible to think of Donald and Gyro opposing themselves to what Benito Cao (2015) calls 'consumer citizenship', refusing to follow the rules of the gas market.

After Gyro equips the new car with teeth and a brain, it is able to supply itself with the amount of fuel it needs and thus sustain itself. At the same time, this also leads to them losing control over the car because it becomes a living being that therefore has its own will. Ultimately, the cars evolve and form part of the environment outside the city as a new species. What is more, the cars rebel against being controlled by people and eventually claim their own freedom. The installation of road signs that warn drivers about the cars can be understood as a sign that these have been accepted as new agents in the environment around Duckburg. The development of this new hybrid species transcends the separation between nature and culture that Latour (2004) also criticizes in his work. However, while Latour argues for giving up the concept of that separation, the comic presents a completely new species that is in a way a hybrid of the two realms.

[80] [Norwegian original: «Hvorfor kan vi ikke bare fylle dem fra an pumpe, som om den var en vanlig bil?» (Nordberg, 2011, p. 41, panel 2).]

[81] [Norwegian original: «Da blir det akkurat som med bensin – vi får et marked som blir utnyttet i profitt øyemed på bekostning av bilkjørere over hele verden» (Nordberg, 2011, p. 41, panel 2).]

[82] Donald shows this disobedience previously when he tries to invent a new fuel on his own, although his attempts go wrong and he ends up harming himself.

In *The Mermaid Man*, Donald takes action against marine pollution because he has been charmed by the mermaid he meets after he passes out underwater. In fact, Donald's original goal was to ensure that Uncle Scrooge's waste pipe remains intact, so he can keep on dumping his waste into the ocean without paying fees. Much like in *Blekkulf*, this story connects the problem of marine pollution with an underwater/onshore problematic, where those who live in the ocean do not have the power to stop a problem for which people onshore are responsible. This becomes apparent when the mermaid who explains the situation tells Donald that her people have tried to clog the pipe several times, but never succeeded. In this case, it is not that the mermaid community lacks agency, but they do not have means that are powerful enough to clog the pipe. Therefore, they end up needing Donald's help. In a similar way as in *Blekkulf*, the underwater / onshore problematic mirrors the asymmetrical power relations between the Global North and Global South, which Andrew Dobson (2003) sees as a central problematic concerning the global distribution of power. Another aspect that recalls the unequal power relations between the two communities is the fact that the mermaids want to remain hidden because they would be harassed if other people knew they existed. Therefore, their voices are not only unheard by the people onshore, but the community is in fact mute out of self-protection, even though this self-protection also harms the group because it prevents them from speaking up.

In the beginning and at the end of the story, the conflict between environmental protection and a capitalist economy is addressed in the situation on the boat. Uncle Scrooge is a representative of a capitalist mindset that completely neglects the environment, which contrasts starkly with the environmental protection inspector, who wants to stop Scrooge McDuck's environmentally harmful waste disposal practices. In the end, when Donald is back after his trip to the sea bed, Uncle Scrooge's dramatic reaction when learning that the waste pipe is now clogged for good (he needs to lie down, saying "I am a sick and poor man"; Nordberg, 2012, p. 42, panel 5[83]) satirizes the economy's reaction to anything that slows down economic growth. At the same time, it also suggests that environmental protection does in fact mean less economic growth, thus threatening Uncle Scrooge's way of life. The clogging of the waste pipe is celebrated as a victory over pollution by both the mermaid community and the environmental protection inspector. This frames destroying a piece of harmful infrastructure to

[83] [Norwegian original: «Jeg er en syk og fattig mann.» (Nordberg, 2012, p. 42, panel 5).]

stop pollution as a positive action, possibly recalling the resistance against unsustainable structures and civic actions that force the state to change an unsustainable practice that John Barry (2006) names as an important factor in 'critical sustainability citizenship'. It should, however, also be mentioned here that Barry does not advocate for actively destroying environmentally harmful infrastructure, but concentrates on highlighting the importance of resisting unsustainable structures and of nonviolent acts of civic disobedience. It can be discussed whether the accidental destruction of the pipe falls under those categories or whether it goes beyond the notion of nonviolence. Looking back at *The Car of the Future*, it is clear that the two stories display different degrees of ideas that Barry discusses in his article.

The stories I analyze in this chapter show different aspects of environmental citizenship, and they also show different motivations for acting in an environmentally friendly way. It becomes clear that aspects of environmental citizenship are not a central and explicitly articulated part of the storyworld in *Donald Duck*. Most often, the motivation for environmentally friendly behavior is not necessarily a concern for the environment, but stems from other factors. The result is nevertheless that environmental topics are taken up in different and more implicit ways in the stories. Environmentally harmful behavior is punished in the stories, and both the different characters' neglectful or more responsible behaviors recall aspects prevalent in theories about environmental citizenship. The stories show a variety of different perspectives on environmental citizenship, sometimes scrutinizing unsustainable structures, and sometimes advocating for a liberal view on the environment that avoids exploiting it for one's own benefit.

8.3 Stereotypes, exaggerations, and moderation

Thomas Andrae (2006) argues that "Barks' stories work by satirizing excess and obsession and embrace an ethic of moderation in which extreme behavior inexorably brings about its own comeuppance" (p. 86). This also applies to the examples by Nordberg and Midthun discussed in this chapter. Even though the stories mostly center around funny situations, there is often a moral to be learned for some characters – mostly Uncle Scrooge and Donald, who show the most extreme behavior. The characters in the *Donald Duck* comics have some didactic potential because they all have some caricatural qualities. In terms of environmental citizenship, Uncle Scrooge stands out as an interesting character

because he is depicted as a stereotypical rich capitalist who tends to either neglect the environment completely or see it as a source of economic profit, subordinating everything to his personal wealth. The satirized depiction of capitalism in Uncle Scrooge's character creates conflicts between himself and others and highlights some underlying structures that can be questioned, something that is transferable to the actual world readers inhabit.

The exaggerations and stereotypes the *Donald Duck* comics use are generally devices that can invite readers to think about what happens in the stories and how the events narrated might relate to the actual world. For example, the waste pipe in *The Mermaid Man* showcases how waste disposal in the ocean can affect marine life. The actual depiction of the consequences is exaggerated, albeit at the same time limited to a specific kind of consequence, because only mutated fish and crustaceans are shown.[84] The story takes up an issue that applies to the actual world and shows it in the context of the reality of Duckburg, which also makes it possible for readers to connect Duckburg (and, subsequently, its citizens) to the actual world. In this context, Duckburg and its inhabitants often function as stand-ins for different people and places in the actual world, and the comics invite readers to draw connections between the two realms. The comics also work with the concept of gaps, as well as the gutter, which often creates funny situations and sometimes subverts readers' expectations, and at other times confirms them. Gaps and the use of the gutter often relate to how the comics invite readers to create a connection between the storyworld and the actual world.

Interestingly, the examples analyzed in this chapter contain some ambivalence regarding characters' motivations, as well as the solutions to difficult problems. In *The Mermaid Man*, Donald is initially in doubt about what he should do because he works for his uncle, but he promises to help the mermaid community. In the end, the fact that the mutated shark causes a submarine landslide hides the fact that Donald did not carry out the job his uncle paid him for. In *Fighting Nature with Nature*, Donald unwillingly imports the mosquitoes at the end to get rid of the vultures, not wanting to lose the money he earned and suffering under the mosquito plague again.

[84] On a side note, the three-eyed shark in the comic can also be understood as an intermedial reference to the TV-show *The Simpsons*, where the pollution coming from the local power plant leads to the development of three-eyed fish that appear as a visual comment in a variety of episodes of the show.

In the examples I have discussed in this chapter, readers are invited to identify with different characters. In *Fighting Nature with Nature*, readers are mostly invited to identify with Donald's nephews, who are the moral voice in the story and advocate for a less utilitarian view of nature and the environment. In both this story and in *The Car of the Future*, Huey, Dewey, and Louie also set readers' expectations. Following the general dynamic in *Donald Duck*, the three boys understand early on that Donald's schemes are headed for trouble and warn him about taking things too far. Given that the nephews are usually right about their assumptions concerning Donald, readers who are familiar with the comics might be able to predict how the plot will develop. In both stories, it is also the nephews who appear as competent characters, which contrasts mostly with Donald and his impulsive and sometimes irrational behavior.

In *The Mermaid Man*, readerly invitation is more strongly tied to Donald himself, who turns out to be a hero for the mermaid community. The invitation to identify more strongly with Donald means that Uncle Scrooge and his unwillingness to adopt a less harmful method of waste disposal are presented as negative in the story, especially since the clogging of the pipe is celebrated as a victory. Thus, the invitation to identify with Donald possibly implies that readers are meant to regard the destruction of the waste pipe as positive, which is something that can be scrutinized. *The Car of the Future* is interesting with regard to the outcome of the story. On the one hand, Donald and Gyro's creation goes wild, meaning that their idea of constructing a car that runs on a more environmentally friendly fuel has failed. On the other hand, the cars are accepted as new beings in the environment around Duckburg, and the story's ending suggests that the wild cars live peacefully and undisturbed by others.

Interestingly, in *Fighting Nature with Nature*, Donald himself stands out as a bad character because he causes chaos in the city and neglects natural balances. This shows that Donald's role in the comics is highly changeable, and he can appear as a positive or a more negative character. This changeable quality can invite readers to think more about the stories they have read and to evaluate which characters have been presented as positive or negative, and who readers are invited to identify with in which stories.

8.4 Conclusion

Aspects of environmental citizenship are not the main concern of *Donald Duck* stories, which are more strongly characterized by their humoristic qualities. In my analysis, I have shown that the comics nevertheless address aspects of environmental citizenship in a more implicit way as a part of the stories they tell. I have discussed how different views that can be connected with environmental citizenship are expressed through characters' behaviors, as well as through some of the thoughts and conversations they have.

It became clear that reader identification in the three examples varies, with Donald sometimes appearing as a positive character readers are invited to identify with, or as a negative character who misbehaves. The most openly expressed moral voice in the stories belongs to Donald's nephews, who advocate for a liberal view on the environment in Bell's sense. In all the cases presented here, the comics follow typical patterns and dynamics known from *Donald Duck*, such as Donald's bad luck, the fact that his nephews are more competent than Donald himself, or Uncle Scrooge's greed and capitalist mindset. It also became clear that while Duckburg is a fictional and highly changeable place, some of the environmental problems taken up in the stories can be related to the actual world, such as issues related to the gas market, or a polluted environment like in *Fighting Nature with Nature*.

9 Antonella Durante: *Nina lærer gjenbruk*

Published in 2018, *Nina lærer gjenbruk* [*Nina Learns Recycling*] by Antonella Durante is a picturebook about a young girl named Nina, who moves into her grandparents' former house with her parents and their cat, Molly. Because the house needs to be renovated, they empty it. Instead of throwing the old things in the house out, they decide to repair and reuse as many of them as possible. The story follows the protagonist and her parents as they find ideas for what objects they can use in which ways and how they furnish the house with them.

The picturebook has 16 unnumbered double-spreads with 12 double-spreads showing one picture on each side, and four double-spreads with pictures stretching over both pages. The book's narrative title (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 243) gives a summary of what the protagonist learns in the course of the narrative readers are about to engage with. The cover shows Nina standing barefoot in a meadow, smiling at the readers. Next to her are her cat and a toolbox. The background shows her grandparents' house and an apple tree next to it in front of a lightly clouded sky. Nina wears dungarees with a pencil in the front pocket. The cover illustration takes up central themes of the picturebook. It introduces the main character, shows the cat Molly, who is the book's comic sidekick, and takes up the topic of crafting, which is the main strategy Nina and her parents use to recycle throughout the story. Visually, the picturebook is overall characterized by a realistic drawing style, reminiscent of color pencil drawings, that often take up large portions of the double-spreads. The pictures are dominated by bright colors that create an idyllic and positive atmosphere. The verbal text is characterized by simple sentences and much direct speech between the characters. Readers are often directly addressed with questions, and the text also points out different details in the pictures, inviting readers to explore the double-spreads.

Nina Learns Recycling, marketed to children ages four and up, is the first book in the series *Nina, tenker miljø* [*Nina Thinks Environment*], in which so far one other title has been published, in 2019, entitled *Hva er greia med plast?* [*What's the Deal with Plastic?*]. This second volume in the series in particular can be described as a text that borders on being a nonfiction picturebook, where large amounts of the verbal text convey knowledge about plastic and the most central environmental problems connected to it. Using a narrative structure to convey factual knowledge is a quite common strategy for children's nonfiction literature (Birkeland, Mjør, et al., 2018, p. 164). *Nina Learns Recycling* is somewhat less

strongly characterized by nonfictional qualities, although it can also be argued that in this picturebook too, the narrative first and foremost conveys knowledge about recycling and has a comparably thin plot that does not contain a distinct dramatic structure.

9.1 A storyworld without conflicts

The storyworld in the picturebook evolves mainly in and around Nina's grandparents' house, to which the family moves at the beginning of the book. The house functions as the place where the old things that Nina and her parents find are given new roles. It is shown on the first page of the picturebook and is described as "big and nice […] but […] a bit old and outworn. The house lies in the middle of an exciting garden with many flowers and many apple trees" (Durante, 2018, ds. 1, recto).[85] The picture on the same page shows the house, which resembles a tree stump with one window that is lopsided. In front of the house are an apple tree and some flowers. Nina is shown in the picture's foreground, doing a handstand. The cat Molly is sitting on the roof. The picture introduces the main location where the story takes place, as well as the main character herself. On the following double-spread, Nina's parents start to empty the house. Many of the objects that will be altered in the course of the story can already be seen on this second double-spread, which shows Nina sitting on a swing to the right and some of the things her parents took out of the house to the left (fig. 9.1). The house itself is shown in the far background, allowing readers to orientate themselves further in the story. In this way, the second double-spread also acts as a reference point throughout the story and readers are invited to draw connections between different stages of the narrative. The visual focus of the story lies on Nina and her parents, and on the things they recycle. The pictures sometimes show only smaller sections of the house. For example, when Nina and her parents are lying in bed and talking about not throwing everything out, the corresponding picture shows the three characters, the cat, and the bed. The focus of the page lies on them and the topic of their conversation. Meanwhile, other pictures show larger sections of rooms, such as the bathroom. On this double-spread, readers are invited to explore the page and are encouraged to find two of the objects that have previously been upcycled. The

[85] [Norwegian original: «stort og fint […] men […] litt gammelt og slitt. Huset ligger midt i en spennende hage med masse blomster og mange epletrær» (Durante, 2018, ds. 1, recto).]

focus of this picture lies on how the dresser and the old chair have been changed, and not so much on the fact that Nina's mother is taking a bath. Both examples illustrate how pictures can guide readers' focus on a page. On the other hand, the verbal text often refers to details in the pictures or asks questions that engage readers in the storyworld. This illustrates Perry Nodelman's argument that "words draw our attention to specific details of pictures", but that at the same time "the pictures focus our attention on specific aspects of the words" (Nodelman, 1996, p. 240). Furthermore, it underlines the close interplay between the two modalities in the picturebook. Child readers' engagement with visual details in picturebooks is a point that Monica Mitchell (2022) points to in an article about first graders' readings of picturebooks. She points to the fact that young child readers are often interested in details in pictures that are not necessarily relevant to the main plot of a story. In *Nina Learns Recycling*, an explorative approach to the double-spreads is encouraged multiple times in the narrative, and readers are invited to discover how different objects in the house have been transformed into something new.

The storyworld in *Nina Learns Recycling* displays some simplifying tendencies, while at the same time, it has many decorative elements on the visual level, mostly in the form of flowers. However, the sections of the house that are shown in the pictures are usually directly connected to what is being said in the verbal text. The cat, Molly, often acts as comic relief in the background, playing with nails while Nina is hammering, or making a colored mark with her paw on the wall while Nina and her mother are painting. While this happens in the background and is not a central part of the story, it also invites readers to look at the pictures and explore them beyond the scope of the main story. The lack of detail regarding the house itself allows readers to immerse themselves into the narrative more easily by means of the 'principle of minimal departure' (Ryan, 1991). While some of the things that Nina and her parents reuse are shown in more detailed drawings, and the objects' stories are more specific, there is still plenty of room for readers to fill the story with details from their own experiences, because the story evokes nostalgia as a more general overriding feeling connected to the activity of recycling. Furthermore, while Nina's grandparents function as a constant reference during the recycling project, they are never described in detail. Therefore, readers can connect this part of the narrative more easily to their own thoughts about, for example, their grandparents. The same is true for Nina and her parents. The story focuses mostly on how they reuse things in the house and have new ideas for what they can make. In turn, there is little description of their

characters, apart from the fact that they all act in an environmentally responsible way. Visually, they also have few specific characteristics. Their faces, as well as their bodies and hairstyles, are drawn in simplified ways. This simplicity also allows readers to immerse themselves into the narrative more easily, and points to Scott McCloud (1993), who writes that the more simplicity there is in the drawing style, the easier it is for readers to see themselves as the characters they see in a graphic narrative (pp. 35–37).

Two central reasons for starting the recycling project in the story are nostalgia on the one hand, and a concern for the environment on the other hand. Interestingly, in this picturebook, there is no visible environmental pollution that would suggest a problematic situation that needs to be solved by a change in behavior toward the environment. Nevertheless, Nina's parents are environmentally aware characters who emphasize that they must "think about the environment" (Durante, 2018, ds. 3, verso)[86] and that "maybe there isn't enough room in the world to throw out everything you don't want to own anymore" (Durante, 2018, ds. 5, verso).[87] Here, environmentally friendly behavior plays a central role even without the threat of environmental pollution. The story rather presents its idea of environmentally friendly behavior as something fun that Nina discovers and learns throughout the narrative. Not only does the picturebook not depict any environmental pollution, but in fact the story generally does not contain any conflict, thus lacking an arc of suspense. Since Nina's parents are already environmentally aware characters in the beginning of the narrative, they do not have to reflect on and change their behavior. Instead, they discover the fun side of recycling together with their daughter. One of the central functions of Nina's parents is that they help her to actualize her ideas of what to make out of the old things. Their role is mainly to support and encourage the protagonist, which leads to her understanding the merits of resource-saving behavior. The lack of conflict and any visible environmental pollution in the picturebook can, however, potentially impede readers' immersion into the storyworld. Without a noticeable impetus to change one's behavior, it might be difficult for young readers to understand the necessity of adopting recycling as a practice in everyday life, even though its merits are expressed in the picturebook. Furthermore, this absence of

[86] [Norwegian original: «Vi må tenke på miljøet» (Durante, 2018, ds. 3, verso).]

[87] [Norwegian original: «Kanskje det ikke er plass nok i verden til å kaste alt det man ikke vil ha lenger» (Durante, 2018, ds. 5, verso).]

conflict can also lead to the story being experienced as only a little bit interesting, because the plot progresses without notable changes throughout the story.

The only time at which the storyworld leaves the area of the house is when Nina and her parents take the tram to the city to celebrate having finished the work in the house. The narrative function of the trip to the city becomes evident when Nina's parents want to buy her a toy as a reward for her work, and Nina declines because she realizes she does not need a new toy as she "knows a much more fun game at home" (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, verso),[88] which turns out to be recycling. In effect, the scene in the city serves to show that Nina has undergone significant positive growth in her worldview. This is underlined by the verbal text's emphasis on calling recycling "much more fun" (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, recto)[89] more than once, and by its asking, "[w]hy do we need to buy new things to have fun?" (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, recto).[90] The pictures on the double-spread also reflect that opinion. As Nina sits in her room next to old things that are ready to be made into something new, she smiles contentedly at the readers (fig. 9.2).

Her contentment is also taken up on the left page of the same double-spread, where she is walking next to her parents in the city, all three of them smiling. In the background is the toy store, and a boy standing in front of the shop window with his hands on the windowpane. Here, readers are invited to see the contrast between the boy and Nina, who has realized she does not need a new toy if she can make things on her own. Since Nina is smiling while the boy seems to be engrossed by what he sees in the shop window, the narrative presents Nina's stance as preferable to the boy's apparent desire to get a new toy. This is underlined further by the fact that arguably the boy's mother, who is next to him, is reaching out for his hand in an attempt to pass by the toy store, while the boy has stopped to look in. Their situation inverts what has happened between Nina and her parents, where they want to buy their daughter something, but she declines.

Central elements in the storyworld are the notions of transformation and imagination or fantasy. Both aspects are closely related to the picturebook's main plot of how Nina and her parents transform objects into other things that sometimes serve new and surprising purposes (e.g., a strainer that is used as a lampshade). This process is described as "magical" (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, recto),[91]

[88] [Norwegian original: «[Jeg] vet om en mye morsommere lek hjemme» (Durante, 2018, ds.14, verso).]

[89] [Norwegian original: «mye morsommere» (Durante, 2018, ds. 14. recto).]

[90] [Norwegian original: «Hvorfor må man kjøpe ting for å ha det gøy?» (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, recto).]

[91] [Norwegian original: «magisk» (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, recto).]

highlighting its creativity. Considering the fact that Nina has discovered recycling as a new hobby, as well as her central position in the picturebook's storyworld, it is even possible to think of her as a kind of magician who gives old things a new purpose, highlighting the positivity connected with the activity.

The picturebook's open ending, the various questions posed throughout the narrative, and the fragmentariness on the visual level all emphasize that the picturebook's storyworld is incomplete, and the reader's importance becomes evident at numerous points in the narrative. This refers back to Doležel (1998) and his remarks about fictional worlds. The incompleteness of the storyworld in *Nina Learns Recycling* is a central aspect of the book, since this is the point where the narrative invites readers in and encourages them to get involved in the topic of the story.

The picturebook's storyworld is centered around the main characters and how they recycle objects in and around their house. Nina is the focus of the story, and the narrative concentrates on her journey in discovering recycling as an activity that is both fun and resourceful. The storyworld's lightness on both the verbal and the visual level emphasizes the positivity associated with Nina's development.

9.2 Recycling as an activity for environmental citizens

The picturebook first and foremost takes up aspects of environmental citizenship when it comes to Nina and her family. At the very beginning of the picturebook, her parents are established as environmentally aware characters. Early on in the narrative, when the family talks about how some of the old things in the house are broken, Nina's mother says "We mustn't throw everything out, some things can be fixed […] We have to think about the environment, you know" (Durante, 2018, ds. 3, verso).[92] Likewise, later, when they start the recycling project, Nina's father notes that "Maybe there isn't enough room in the world to throw out everything you don't want to own anymore?" (Durante, 2018, ds. 5, verso).[93] This question seems to be addressed not only to Nina, but also to the readers. It can be read as an invitation to think about one's consumption of resources and ultimately about

[92] [Norwegian original: «Vi må nok ikke kaste alt, noe kan jo fikses […] Vi må tenke på miljøet, vet du!» (Durante, 2018, ds. 3, verso).]

[93] [Norwegian original: «Kanskje det ikke er plass nok i verden til å kaste alt det man ikke vil ha lenger?» (Durante, 2018, ds. 5, verso).]

one's ecological footprint. The idea that recycling is a practical measure to work against pollution seems to hint at Andrew Dobson's concept of ecological citizenship (Dobson, 2003). However, one key point from Dobson's model is missing. As mentioned, there is no conflict in the picturebook's story. Therefore, the issue of injustice is also absent from the narrative, which is central for Dobson. While Nina's mother does say that they have to consider the environment, and her father suggests that one cannot throw out everything that is not used anymore, neither of those aspects are connected to a bigger picture, and ultimately, there is no reason given in the narrative for why the family has to consider the environment. So, although the environmental merit of recycling is mentioned more than once in the story, it functions as one motivation among several for the family's activity and does not necessarily stand out as the most important one – especially considering that nostalgia is also mentioned as a motivation for recycling several times. Furthermore, the reason why there is not enough room to throw out all the used things is not explored further. So, even though a connection is drawn between recycling and a positive effect on the environment, it is never mentioned that throwing out unwanted items will in fact have a negative effect on the environment, or that the environment is already polluted. Thus, the behavior of Nina and her parents might display a generally liberal take on environmental citizenship, rather than a more specific model of it. Their engagement on behalf of the environment corresponds to what Benito Cao (2015) writes about liberal takes on environmental citizenship in general: "liberal environmental citizenship relies on individual choice and voluntary actions" (p. 76). In accordance with this, Nina and her family actively choose to recycle various objects from the house because they want to preserve memories and protect the environment.

Nina's parents seem to be aware of the impact they have on the environment, and they want to prevent it from getting bigger by reusing as many of the things they find in the house as possible. There is, as I mentioned, no visible environmental pollution in the picturebook's storyworld, but the issue still exists as a more abstract factor in the parents' awareness. Here, readers are invited to supplement the parents' reference to the need to protect the environment with their individual knowledge about pollution in the actual world, since the text does not depict any pollution on the verbal or the visual level. Since the story takes place at Nina's grandparents' house and there are almost no other characters apart from Nina and her family, their environmental citizenship seems to take place in an isolated environment until toward the end, when they invite people from the

neighborhood to a recycling festival. Even though the story does not take place at a defined location, the absence of environmental pollution, as well as the visual depiction of Nina and her parents as white characters of probably Central European ethnicity, suggests the story takes place in a Western setting. They furthermore seem to be members of the middle class, considering that their two reasons for recycling are the environment and nostalgia, but not, for example, financial factors.

The family's environmental citizenship has several aspects to it. First, it is Nina and her parents who recycle and reuse things from the house and refurnish the place with old things. As this project develops further, Nina and her parents start thinking more abstractly about why people need new things to begin with. Nina writes down several keywords about sustainability and what has been central in the story so far: "Fantasy, recycling, transformation, environment, reusing" (Durante, 2018, ds. 13, recto).[94] Accompanying the words are pictures of how various objects can become something new. Together, this creates a kind of mind map that summarizes some key points of the story (fig. 9.3). The mind map expresses largely a liberal take on aspects of environmental citizenship, much like the family's general behavior up until this point in the narrative. The fact that Nina seems to draw and write her mind map directly onto a wall emphasizes the liberal attitude that her parents have in other areas, not just when it comes to environmental questions. In addition, it serves as a quite direct reminder for readers about what has been important in the story so far. Much like the abstract notion that the environment must be considered, which makes recycling an important activity, the terms that Nina writes on the wall are quite abstract and general.

On the same double-spread, the family's behavior is also set into a bigger context. Now, it is not only a case of the three of them not needing many new things to furnish the house they have moved into, but Nina's mother starts questioning the need to buy new things in general. The family's resourcefulness leads to a more critical stance toward consumption behavior. Questioning the need to buy new things points to what Benito Cao (2015) calls 'consumer citizenship' (pp. 63–64). In a way, Nina refuses to continue being a 'consumer citizen'. As mentioned in the previous section, Nina's parents want to reward her for all her help and take her to a toy store. However, Nina decides she does not need a reward in the form of a new toy since she has now discovered how much she likes

[94] [Norwegian original: «Fantasi, resirkulering, forvandling, miljø, gjenbruk» (Durante, 2018, ds. 13, recto).]

recycling things and prefers this over buying new things. The girl acts as a role model and illustrates the desirable behavior that accords with what the previous double-spread suggested, namely that it is "much nicer" (Durante, 2018, ds. 13, recto)[95] with old, recycled things. The creativity associated with the recycling project has led to Nina rejecting something that is seen as unnecessary consumption: buying a new toy when she can create new things out of what she finds in the house.

Nina's understanding of the merits of recycling leads to the last step of her development as an environmentally aware character in the picturebook. After Nina's father remarks that "[i]t [recycling – B. H.] is good for the environment, for you and me and mom – and for everyone who lives in the neighborhood" (Durante, 2018, ds. 15, verso),[96] Nina wants to arrange a recycling festival in their garden. The invitation is not only directed at the people from her neighborhood – the very last page asks readers whether they would also like to come. Here, Nina starts to invite the community around her (including readers) to get involved in more environmentally friendly practices. Her idea is that "[m]aybe our friends and neighbors can invite their friends, and then it becomes a huge festival!" (Durante, 2018, ds. 15, recto).[97] With the importance of considering the environment in the background, the recycling festival can be read as an example of the slogan "think globally, act locally", which is, as Benito Cao (2015) writes, "often associated with environmental activism" (p. 164). However, the global thinking in the story happens only on an abstract level since environmental problems are excluded from the narrative. Therefore, it can seem like Nina's activism lacks a stronger contextual anchoring that illustrates *how* her resourceful and environmentally friendly behavior have a positive impact on the environment.

Nina Learns Recycling expresses a liberal take on aspects of environmental citizenship. Most of the story focuses on individual behavior and, generally, the story takes into account solely individual measures of how to live in a more environmentally friendly way. Since the narrative proceeds in a quite isolated space, structural issues that might lead to the situation of there being not enough room in the world to throw out everything one does not want to own anymore are

[95] [Norwegian original: «mye hyggeligere» (Durante, 2018, ds.13, recto).]

[96] [Norwegian original: «Det [gjenbruk – B. H.] er bra for miljøet, for deg og meg og mamma, – og alle som bor her i grenda» (Durante, 2018, ds. 15, verso).]

[97] [Norwegian original: «Kanskje våre venner og naboer kan invitere sine venner igjen, og så blir det en kjempestor festival!» (Durante, 2018, ds. 15, recto).]

not addressed throughout the picturebook. The political side of the family's behavior is not discussed openly; the focus lies more on the joy Nina finds in recycling and being creative with this activity. Nevertheless, a more political aspect of the family's environmentally aware behavior is expressed at the end of the picturebook when Nina invites both the people from her neighborhood and the readers to her recycling festival. This action takes up the idea of spreading knowledge about recycling and implicitly also that of teaching others how to adopt a more environmentally friendly lifestyle.

9.3 Addressing readers directly

Nina Learns Recycling is marketed to children from the age of four, so it can be assumed that the picturebook is meant to be read by adult and child readers together. The picturebook has a distinctly positive atmosphere and frames all the characters as responsible and trustworthy people. Readers are invited to enter a storyworld without conflict, in which they are encouraged to be creative and inventive.

Child readers are most directly invited to identify with the protagonist, the only child character in the narrative. Together with her, readers are invited to discover the changes that happen to the house, and to understand how recycling works. Nina herself can be called an ideal child from an environmental perspective, and in that sense, she might act as a role model for child readers who identify with her. Nina is presented as a competent and independent child throughout the narrative, as she is often depicted with tools such as a hammer or a saw, working on the various recycling and renovation projects. Over the course of the narrative, Nina not only learns about recycling, but she eventually starts questioning the need to buy new things more in general, and even refuses to get a new toy. The related double-spread shows Nina in her room, surrounded by "many old things that are waiting to get a new life" (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, recto),[98] smiling at the readers (fig. 9.2). The same double-spread starts with the narrative voice asking, "Why do we have to buy new things to have fun?" (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, recto).[99] This question is directed at readers, invites them to reflect on their own consumption behavior, and suggests that buying new things is actually *not* necessary, because

[98] [Norwegian original: «mange gamle ting som venter på å få et nytt liv» (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, recto).]

[99] [Norwegian original: «Hvorfor må man kjøpe nye ting for å ha det gøy?» (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, recto).]

the text continues with: “It is much more fun to make things yourself, make new things out of old ones” (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, recto).[100] Here, the educational intent of the picturebook becomes very clear, since recycling is presented as the clearly preferable option to buying new things. The recycling project is the focus of the story, being part of the picturebook’s title. A central strategy used in the picturebook to teach children about recycling is repetition. Perry Nodelman (1996) writes that “[a] basic assumption about education is that repeating a task helps us to learn it – and because of the didactic impulse behind children’s literature, its structures are often repetitive” (p. 161). While Nodelman refers to linguistic patterns in relation to repetitive structures, *Nina Learns Recycling* employs repetition as more of a general pattern that considers the plot of the picturebook.

On multiple occasions, the text invites readers into its storyworld by asking questions and inviting them to think about more ideas for recycling and reusing things in different ways. Furthermore, both the verbal text and the pictures invite readers to find different objects that are being reused. At one point, for example, the text asks: “But what is hanging from the ceiling?” (Durante, 2018, ds. 10, recto),[101] inviting readers to look at the picture above the text before reading the answer: “It is an old strainer” (Durante, 2018, ds. 10, recto).[102] Thus, the text repeatedly steers the focus to the pictures and some of their details. Another strategy used in the picturebook is that the verbal text asks questions that are not only directed at other characters, but also at the readers. For example, when Nina’s father is holding an old chair that is missing two legs, he asks “What can we use this for?” (Durante, 2018, ds. 5, recto).[103] The father also seems to break the fourth wall at this point because the picture shows him looking at the readers. Thus, they are involved on a verbal as well as a visual level here. The question, being the last line of verbal text on that page, also works as a page-turner and invites readers to imagine what the family might make out of the chair with the turn of the page. At another point, the text communicates with readers in a way that is not directly related to the picturebook’s main topic but that tries to establish a more intimate connection with readers. As Nina looks at the new coatrack made from her grandmother’s old ladder, which she used to pick apples, the verbal text asks: “Do

[100] [Norwegian original: «Det er mye morsommere å lage nye ting selv, lage nye ting av gammelt» (Durante, 2018, ds. 14, recto).]

[101] [Norwegian original: «Men hva er det som henger fra taket?» (Durante, 2018, ds. 10, recto).]

[102] [Norwegian original: «Det er et gammelt dørslag» (Durante, 2019, ds. 10, recto).]

[103] [Norwegian original: «Hva kan vi bruke denne til?» (Durante, 2018, ds. 5, recto).]

you like apple cake?" (Durante, 2018, ds. 9, recto).[104] What distinguishes this instance from other moments where readers are addressed is that here it is not a character asking the question, but the narrating instance. So, here, it is explicitly the readers and *not* the characters who are being addressed, which emphasizes the picturebook's didactic dimension because the narrative voice clearly seeks to build a positive relationship with the readers. The same thing occurs at the end of the story, when Nina suggests organizing a recycling festival for the people in the neighborhood. The penultimate double-spread shows a picture of Nina's recycling festival with four children standing behind a fence, looking interestedly into the garden. The accompanying verbal text discusses Nina's idea for the festival and expresses her excitement about it. On the last double-spread, which only has a picture on the verso, Nina sits on the armrest of a sofa, looking at the readers. Above her, the verbal text says, "Will you come, too?" (Durante, 2018, ds. 16, verso).[105] Here, again, readers are addressed directly and openly by the narrative voice. In addition, the question creates a slightly open ending, where readers are invited to think more about the recycling festival, or how it might turn out. The ending also establishes readers as part of a group, friends of Nina's, who are invited to participate in what she does. Here, the pedagogical goal of getting readers engaged in the topic of recycling becomes most apparent.

As mentioned before, nostalgia is one of the two reasons given for starting the recycling project. By referring to Nina's and her parents' memories of her grandparents while they make something new out of something they had used regularly, the narrative invites readers to connect to the text on an emotional level on multiple occasions. Given the fact that there is almost no description of Nina's grandparents, they can be read as gaps ('*Leerstellen*') that readers can fill with memories of their own grandparents, or possibly other people they have an emotional connection with.

A factor that characterizes Nina's parents is their pedagogical interaction with their daughter. As mentioned, the parents' main function in the narrative is to support Nina in her learning process and help her create new things. In that way, while her parents constantly appear in the story, they do not dominate the narrative but – quite the contrary – appear as humble characters, and as not controlling. Nina is given the most room in the story, which emphasizes that the picturebook seeks

[104] [Norwegian original: «Liker du eplekake?» (Durante, 2018, ds. 9, recto).]

[105] [Norwegian original: "Vil du også komme?" (Durante, 2018, ds. 16, verso).]

to depict the child's discovery of the merits of recycling and upcycling. Relatedly, the narrative seems to give adult readers quite clear guidelines concerning its idea of how to support a child's development when it comes to environmentally friendly behavior. The narrative voice in *Nina Learns Recycling* is very distinct at times, because it addresses readers quite openly on multiple occasions throughout the narrative. At some points, it encourages them to explore the double-spreads, while at others, it invites them to connect themselves and the actual world they inhabit to the storyworld they are immersed into. Many of the questions asked by the verbal text show that the picturebook has a distinct idea of what values it wants to convey to readers.

The picturebook uses both verbal and visual strategies to draw readers into the narrative, often by breaking the fourth wall on both levels. It openly tries to encourage readers to engage with what is happening in the story, and the ending especially invites them to be creative and think further about recycling. The narrative's educational goals, while not openly formulated, are expressed quite strongly by, for example, the questions asked by the narrative voice that give readers a distinct idea of what is deemed good and environmentally friendly behavior, and by repeatedly framing recycling as more fun than, for example, buying a new toy. The merit of recycling is argued for on both a rational and an emotional level by using the environment and nostalgia as twin reasons for adopting a more resourceful lifestyle.

9.4 Conclusion

Nina Learns Recycling focuses mostly on the main character and her discovery of the merits of recycling. The small set of other characters mostly function to support Nina, who is also the figure readers are most strongly invited to identify with. In this sense, it can be suggested that readers are also supposed to undergo a development comparable to Nina's.

In this analysis, I carved out that the picturebook's liberal attitude does not only concern aspects of environmental citizenship, but in fact all three sections of the analysis. The storyworld is presented as a safe space, drawn in a colorful, slightly childlike way and characterized by simple sentences and the absence of conflict. Nina's parents are portrayed as liberal characters who support their daughter and teach her about the merits of recycling without being controlling or restraining. While the storyworld is quite isolated for the most part, since the

narrative mainly takes place in and around the grandparents' house, the text regularly invites readers to draw connections between the storyworld and the actual world by addressing them and asking questions that sometimes go beyond what happens on the pages. Here, storyworld and the role of the reader are tightly connected, not least because the narrative voice appears as distinct, both describing what happens in the story and also turning toward readers on several occasions.

Regarding aspects of environmental citizenship, the picturebook also conveys liberal values and focusses on individual behavior and choices that the characters willingly make in order to live in a more resourceful and environmentally friendly manner. These two aspects are tightly connected to each other in the story, and recycling in fact comprises the main dimension of environmental citizenship that is depicted in the picturebook. Both recycling and resourceful behavior in general are furthermore presented as individual choices and responsibilities. While Nina does promote recycling to a larger group that includes readers at the end of the narrative, this still puts the emphasis on individuals. An interesting aspect of the story that concerns environmental citizenship is the lack of an environmental conflict as a motivation to become a more environmentally aware citizen. This also translates to the storyworld, where neither the verbal text nor the visuals show environmental pollution as part of Nina's reality, which might be a potential impediment to readers' immersion into the storyworld.

Two main strategies for connecting with readers are, on the one hand, Nina as the role model and main character readers are invited to identify with, and on the other hand, nostalgia as both an argument for recycling and a way to emotionally immerse readers into the storyworld. Both strategies underline the picturebook's distinct educational goal of conveying the merits of recycling to readers and encouraging them to adopt a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. This goal is most directly expressed in the story's repetitive structure and its open ending that invites readers to Nina's recycling festival.

10 Josef Tzegai Yohannes and Steve Baker: *The Urban Legend*

The Urban Legend is a comics series about the teacher Malcom T. Madiba, who fights injustice in the fictional Capital City as the titular Urban Legend. The series was first published in 2010 and is distinctly inspired by American superheroes. The protagonist's name recalls civil rights activist Malcolm X, as well as Nelson Mandela (The Urban Legend, 2019). Madiba's martial arts background, which he uses as the Urban Legend, and his black-and-yellow suit are explicit references to Bruce Lee, who served as an inspiration for the character (Yohannes, 2014, p. 39). The first volume of the series has the subtitle "a real superhero evolves" (Yohannes, 2014), and indeed the protagonist conforms to the basic features of the superhero character type, which Peter Coogan (2006) defines as follows:

> A heroic character with a selfless, pro-social mission; with superpowers – extraordinary abilities, advanced technology, or highly developed physical, mental, or mystical skills; who has a superhero identity embodied in a codename and iconic costume, which typically expresses his biography, character, powers, or origin (transformation from ordinary person to superhero); and who is generally distinct, i.e. can be distinguished from characters of related genres (fantasy, science fiction, detective, etc.) by a preponderance of generic conventions. Often superheroes have dual identities, the ordinary of which is usually a closely guarded secret. (p. 30)

Thus, the Urban Legend has a secret civic identity as the teacher Malcolm T. Madiba, he wears an iconic costume that references his powers, and he has a greater mission to fight crime and injustice. In other words, *The Urban Legend* can be defined as a superhero comics series. As Coogan (2006) notes in his book, genres rely on conventions. In the case of the superhero genre, the most important aspect is the figure of the superhero who gives the genre its name (p. 24). Another central characteristic of the superhero genre that also applies to *The Urban Legend* is that "a superhero is not someone who performs just one heroic task, but someone who has an ongoing mission to perform such feats with regularity" (Smith, 2017, p. 128). While the special issue narrates one isolated story, it is located within the larger storyworld of the series, in which the protagonist has multiple quests in his fight against injustice. Furthermore, the hero's base in Capital City is another thing

that typifies him as a superhero, since "the city is the place where most superheroes are based and where most of their adventures take place" (Duncan, Smith, & Levitz, 2019, p. 216). Capital City as the main location for the series also reflects the way that superhero comics are generally "closely associated with American comic books" (Smith, 2017, p. 128), and indeed the environment in which the general series takes place appears as a potentially American setting. Because the hero's mission is to fight crime, some conventions and expectations from the action-adventure genre also apply to *The Urban Legend*, not least because of the protagonist's skills in martial arts.

In this chapter, I analyze a special issue from the series about climate change from 2019. In the comic book, the Urban Legend travels to the Amazon to help his friend Matin, a climate activist who has been kidnapped. As he is looking for his friend, the Urban Legend meets an indigenous tribe whose members tell him about the challenges they face as a result of climate change. Together with the tribe, he rescues his friend and drives out an evil businessman who is responsible for illegal deforestation in the region. The cover shows the titular hero with closed eyes, holding the Earth in his hands. However, the Earth is ruptured and a lava-like orange-red substance seems to be breaking out from underneath the ground. The whole planet is glowing red. The picture takes up the topic of the special issue, climate change, which is also printed in a text box underneath the series title in the Norwegian version. The hero holding the planet establishes his role as someone who has the fate of the planet in his hands. His body language underlines his concern for the planet, which is something that is evident in the story. The background of the picture is blue with small white dots: the night sky. The stars seem to be concentrated behind the protagonist's head, illuminating both him and the title from behind. This depicts the Urban Legend further as the hero (or savior) of the story.

The comic book's story has 24 unnumbered pages, as well as two double pages with further information on climate change and about the author of the series. The special issue of *The Urban Legend* was published both in English and in Norwegian, and I will refer to the English version in this chapter. Visually, the comic draws on a typically American superhero style that is vaguely reminiscent of the works of artists like Neal Adams who "revived [Burne] Hogarth's flayed look, in which every muscle stands in sharp relief, as if the covering skin had been removed" (Duncan et al., 2019, p. 222).

10.1 A superhero's journey into the Amazon

The story of the special issue is largely plot-driven and characterized by conventions of both the superhero and the action-adventure genre. Since the superhero genre is already hinted at on the cover of the special issue, as well as early in the story, it can be assumed that certain scripts (Herman, 2002) are thereby activated for readers familiar with this type of narrative. The plot can be roughly divided into three main parts. The first third of the story serves as an introduction, where the issues of climate change are introduced and the main conflict of the story, the disappearance of Malcolm's friend Matin, happens. The middle third takes up Malcolm's journey to the Brazilian Amazon and how he discovers what crimes are happening in the region, together with members of an indigenous tribe. The last third shows the solution to the conflict. Thus, *The Urban Legend* follows a classic three-act structure. In each part, the environment where the story takes place is different. The first part is mainly located at a climate conference in Oslo, where iconic pictures of issues connected to climate change are shown. The second part takes place in the rainforest, where the environment in the panels mainly consists of trees and plants from the forest. What is striking here is that although the topic of the comic book is climate change, more specifically issues of pollution and illegal deforestation in the Amazon, the environment in the panels is depicted in bright colors even when polluted areas are shown. The third part takes place partly at the headquarters of the hero's opponent, partly in the rainforest, and partly back in Oslo.

In the comics series, the protagonist is established as a moral and heroic character who fights injustice, and the origin of his superhero identity can be traced back to the murder of his brother in the first season of *The Urban Legend*, giving Malcolm a highly personal reason to fight crime and injustice. This can be compared to the origin stories of other superheroes, such as Batman, who swears to fight crime after his parents are murdered by a robber (Eury, Misiroglu, & Sanderson, 2021). Unlike the main series, the special issue begins in Oslo, where Malcolm visits the Norwegian climate conference with the students in his class, and they watch a video that discusses some of the main problems associated with pollution and climate change. The panels associated with the video cover two pages and function as an introduction to the general topic of the comic book. The first of those pages mainly takes up matters of air pollution and the loss of biodiversity around the globe. The three panels showing this information have a landscape format, which underlines that what is shown here is an ongoing situation

that lasts for some time. As Scott McCloud (1993) argues, long panels often indicate a longer duration of time, compared to the rectangular panels most commonly used in comics (p. 101). In addition, he argues that panels that do not give an indication of the duration of the depicted situation "can also produce a sense of *timelessness*" (p. 102, emphasis in the original), which is what happens on this page. These panels invite readers to draw connections between the storyworld of the comic book and the actual world. The three first panels in the documentary show different regions of the planet that are impacted by the consequences of climate change. The generality of the pictures facilitates the making of connections between worlds, inviting readers to immerse themselves into the storyworld and model it closely to the actual world they inhabit by means of 'closure' (McCloud, 1993) and the 'principle of minimal departure' (Ryan, 1991). Readers may connect the individual panels to each other to construct a holistic mental model of the planet suffering from the consequences of climate change, and round out this mental model with their individual knowledge and experience from the actual world, which underlines that the issues that are taken up in the comic book might also apply to the actual world. The second page concerning the documentary has a layout with six panels in three rows and takes up matters of human action against climate change, as well as human suffering under the consequences of deforestation. This last topic can be understood as a subtle indication of how the story will go on to develop. The more action-driven dynamic of these situations is also reflected in the page layout.

Malcolm's double identity as the Urban Legend is already hinted at during the climate congress and thus strengthens certain conventions and reader expectations for the story. After the video is finished, a man jumps up, accuses the conference's organizers of propagating "fake news" (Yohannes, 2019, p. 5, panel 1), and denies climate change. The next panel shows Malcom, thinking "This could mean trouble" (Yohannes, 2019, p. 5, panel 2). His shadow shows the silhouette of the Urban Legend with its characteristic eye shape. This hint also underlines that the story assumes that readers are aware of Malcolm's double identity.

After the conference, Malcolm gets a message from his friend Matin who is in the Amazon, indicating that he is in trouble. Therefore, Malcolm decides to travel to the Manaus region in Brazil immediately to help his friend. The environment around Manaus is characterized by tropical vegetation, and the panels in the second part of the story are dominated by green and brown color tones. Malcolm needs help getting deeper into the rainforest, and after a conversation

with a seemingly shady character who does not want to help the protagonist, another character offers to drive Malcolm into the forest to a deserted car that has been found a few days earlier. On the way, the two talk about the problematic situation in the Amazon regarding the disappearance of activists and the violence connected to the illegal occupation of land in the rainforest. As they reach the deserted car, a pickup truck with four men on its cargo bed drives by. The men on the truck are marked as evil on the verbal as well as the visual level. One of them says "Nobody can stop us and our evil genius plan for taking over the whole rainforest!" (Yohannes, 2019, p. 10, panel 2), which explicitly spells out their evilness and their goal to the readers. Furthermore, the panel in question displays them as stereotypically evil men: they all appear to be tall and very muscular, wearing furry masks on their heads, and black vests typically associated with biker gangs with a spider on the back. In addition, the two men facing readers have malicious smiles on their faces. Their evilness is further emphasized in the next panel, where Malcolm and the other character are coughing due to the exhaust gases from the truck. A close-up of one of the masked men shows that he is wearing a necklace with the symbol of the Urban Legend on it, which belongs to Matin. All this establishes the men on the truck as the villains who the hero must fight, which makes this scene decisive for the development of the plot. Their moral corruption is thus spelled out clearly in the storyworld.

Malcolm decides to investigate further as the Urban Legend and goes deeper into the rainforest. The first time he appears as the superhero, he is shown in a full-page picture, brachiating through the trees. He is discovered by members of an indigenous tribe, who throw a stone at him and tell him to stay where he is. After some hesitation, the group and its leader, Madalena, guide the protagonist through the rainforest, and he learns about some of the problems they are having with water pollution. One panel shows some tribe members cleaning the river, while Madalena explains what kinds of waste they are encountering because of industrial pollution (fig. 10.1). It is striking that much of what she tells the Urban Legend is connected to statistics ("Did you know that by 2050, it's estimated that there'll be more plastic in the ocean than fish? […] 70% of the air we breathe depends on the ocean's marine plants. […]"; Yohannes, 2019, p. 15, panel 1), which suggests that while belonging to the last indigenous tribe left in the area, she is well informed about the numbers regarding marine life. This can appear as a break in the story, firstly because her native region, Manaus, is not located near the ocean. In addition, while many indigenous tribes in South America are engaged

in fighting the consequences of climate change in their native region, Madalena's good knowledge of statistics stands in sharp contrast to how she is depicted. Neither she nor the other members of her tribe wear modern clothing but are dressed in what look like traditional garments made from natural materials, and the male tribe members also wear headdresses. Furthermore, they all wear makeup that resembles war paint. This amounts to a stereotypically traditional presentation of an indigenous tribe, which is why it contrasts with Madalena's knowledge concerning statistics about marine plastic pollution. Readers may here apply Walton's 'principle of charity' (1990) while reading to accept this possible disruption. However, the contrast between what Madalena says and how she and her tribe are depicted stands out as particularly strong.

The third part of the story begins when Madalena and her people show the Urban Legend where different people have illegally taken land from them and burned the forest down so they can exploit it. The corresponding panel is another full-page picture that shows waterfalls in the rainforest with a column of smoke rising at the horizon. The next page shows the spider gang headquarters, where the boss of the gang, Baines, is holding Matin hostage. Here, the story invites readers to draw a connection between the two pages and thus locate the gang's headquarters in relation to the area they have previously explored with Malcolm and Madalena's tribe. The scene in which the Urban Legend and Madalena's tribe defeat the spider gang displays some characteristics typical of villains in comic books. Baines debases Matin for his activism while smoking a cigar that produces a lot of smoke, framing him as a shady character from a criminal milieu. The following fight between the hero and the evil gang is shown in action-to-action transitions (McCloud, 1993, p. 70), which is typical of fight scenes in comics. After defeating the gang, the Urban Legend is shown in a panel that takes up a half page, standing wide-legged and with arms crossed, facing the readers (fig. 10.2). He says, "It's over for people like you who have bad intentions and is [*sic*] destroying the planet for the sake of money, only driven by power and greed. We stand united as one force, and from now on, nobody can stop us" (Yohannes, 2019, p. 20, panel 3). His unity with the indigenous people is taken up in the picture that shows them as one group with the Urban Legend as a leader figure. Since they are all facing the readers, the protagonist breaks the fourth wall in this situation and speaks not only to Baines, but to people with "bad intentions" more generally, as well as to the readers, who are potentially invited to feel part of the united group that fights against climate crimes.

Later, the Urban Legend and Matin are in the village of the indigenous tribe and the protagonist receives a necklace as a thank you for his help. The story then shifts back to Oslo, where another teacher announces to his class that he wants the students to meet a special guest. He turns on the screen and another half-page panel shows the Urban Legend together with several indigenous people, planting trees. Here, the protagonist breaks the fourth wall to speak to both the class in the comic book, as well as to the readers. He wants to make them aware that it is important to take care of the planet. He ends his speech with an unfinished sentence: "To all of you…" (Yohannes, 2019, p. 23, panel 4), which is finished on the last page, where a full-page picture shows the place where the Urban Legend is, as viewed from above. Small stones spell out "make a change" (Yohannes, 2019, p. 24, panel 1). In this last scene, the story 'pops' to a higher narrative level (Stockwell, 2002), which allows readers to transfer the Urban Legend's call to action to their own actual world more easily. At the same time, this makes for a gradual relocation back to the actual world for readers, since they leave the storyworld via being called upon to "make a change" directly by the protagonist before the story ends.

The storyworld in the special issue of *The Urban Legend* evolves around the hero and its central themes, climate change and pollution. Generally speaking, it shows a low degree of "gappiness" (Herman, 2002, p. 67), which means there are few places where readers have to draw conclusions about what is happening in the comic book. The story is very focused on the main questions and all the situations and conversations readers read about are directly linked to them. The characters in the story are clearly marked as good or evil, and it is equally clear in the story what is deemed good or bad behavior. The storyworld connects to the actual world in different ways in all three parts of the plot and ultimately invites readers to be more involved in action against climate change. These connections also suggest that the story in *The Urban Legend* claims validity both in the storyworld and in the actual world.

A central aspect of the storyworld in this comic book is Malcolm's (and, simultaneously, the readers') journey into an unknown region and an unfamiliar environment. Through the contact with Madalena and her tribe, the hero and the readers are invited to immerse themselves into an environment that, on the one hand, is realistically drawn and a place that has a counterpart in the actual world, while on the other hand, it is an environment that gives Malcolm and the readers new insights about a place they are probably unfamiliar with. With Malcolm learning more and more about the tribe and the environmental challenges they face,

the storyworld of the comic book is characterized by an effort to "open up channels of communication about different ways of imagining and experiencing various environments" (James, 2015, p. 212), which is a fundamentally important potential Erin James ascribes to narratives.

10.2 Taking matters of environmental citizenship into your own hands

The first part of the comic book takes up aspects of environmental citizenship via the documentary that is shown at the climate conference in Oslo at the beginning of the story. Here, the second part of the documentary shows young people protesting against climate change, the consequences of plastic pollution, and illegal deforestation in the Amazon rainforest. The panels concerning the documentary generally deal with the collective issues of climate change. The panel showing the protesters is especially striking with relation to environmental citizenship, since it shows how citizens raise their voices to speak up against unsustainable structures. The issue of speaking up against environmental injustice (and against injustice in general) is taken up multiple times in the narrative. The documentary and the handling of the climate-change denier who speaks up right after it is shown also reflect the issue that environmental citizenship – as well as citizenship in general – is something that has to be learned. With Malcolm explaining to his students why the climate-change denier is wrong, this also underlines the central role of education in this context.

After the conference, Malcolm's moral integrity is depicted when he drives back from the conference in his car, thinking about the use of fossil fuels and the development of electric cars (fig. 10.3). The text substantiates his credibility as an environmentally responsible character because Malcolm thinks about how he would feel "like a hypocrite" (Yohannes, 2019, p. 6, panel 1) if he had driven away from the conference in a car that used a petrol engine instead of his electric car. He goes on to think about the new information he learned at the conference, which at the same time educates readers about the status quo concerning greenhouse gas emissions and the transportation sector in Norway, as well as globally. The two steps Malcolm deems necessary to reduce emissions are to use more renewable energy and to produce more electric cars to reduce demand for fossil fuels. This goes in the direction of reducing one's carbon footprint and evokes aspects of 'ecological citizenship' as formulated by Andrew Dobson (2003). However, Malcolm's thoughts concentrate on only one aspect of the issue of reducing carbon

emissions in the transportation sector, namely the production of electric cars. The emphasis on the production and use of electric cars also places a focus on consumption behavior, which points to Benito Cao's definition of 'consumer citizenship' (Cao, 2015, p. 64). The point Malcom thinks most about does not directly concern civic behavior, but instead focuses on consumption behavior. His thoughts also point to the political power Cao sees in consumption choices, which is also prevalent in slogans such as 'vote with your wallet' (Cao, 2015, p. 67). Something that is absent from his thoughts is the question of how electric cars are produced, which is an important environmental issue. Given that Malcolm is portrayed as a character concerned with questions of injustice who seems to be well informed about climate change, it is striking that he does not think about this dimension when it comes to electric cars. It can be assumed that the reason for this may have to do with the fact that the car maker Audi is one of the sponsors of the special issue, a point that I will discuss more in detail in the next section.

While the first part of the story concentrates on conveying knowledge about climate change, the middle part concentrates on Malcolm's arrival in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest and his discovery of the spider gang responsible for Matin's disappearance. This part is characterized by the contact Malcolm establishes with the indigenous tribe as the Urban Legend. After their initial hesitation as to whether or not they can trust the protagonist, the group's leader shows him around and brings the protagonist face to face with the local consequences of pollution in the Amazon. The focus of the conversation here is on conveying knowledge about the issues at hand. It becomes apparent that the indigenous people are trying to limit the pollution of their area by regularly cleaning up the river as best they can. Since the same panel that shows how the tribe cleans up the river (fig. 10.1) also contains Madalena's more general information about plastic pollution in the ocean, this panel can be read as an example of "think globally, act locally". As I discussed in the previous section, Manaus is not located near the ocean, so the information about the importance of marine plant life and oceanic plastic pollution creates a more global view of a problem that is visually depicted on a local level in the panel with the polluted river.

The third part goes a step further in that the Urban Legend takes action against and directly fights those who are responsible for some of the problems he has witnessed. The spider gang can be read allegorically as people who are harming the environment in the Amazon, specifically those who engage in illegal deforestation. In the third part of the story, the Urban Legend takes justice into his

own hands by intruding into the spider gang's headquarters to rescue his friend. At no point during his search for Matin is any official party such as the police involved, and the reason for this is not discussed in the story. It seems that much like other superheroes, the Urban Legend "serve[s] justice, not law" (Coogan, 2006, p. 124), since he takes matters into his own hands without involving official state institutions.

What is striking about the story told in this comic book is that although the hero is Norwegian, the main plot and the fight against climate crimes happen in Latin America, where his friend Matin is kidnapped. On the one hand, this places the focus on the Global South, the part of the planet that is suffering most from the consequences of climate change. On the other hand, the plot also shifts the focus away from the Global North as the region mostly responsible for the problems the Global South faces without discussing this issue. It might also be inferred from this that there are no serious climate-related problems in the Global North, which is why the hero travels to Latin America. This becomes problematic when considering that in this story, the Western hero helps the indigenous tribe to drive people out from their land. It appears that the indigenous people lack the agency to fight the spider gang on their own and the intervention of the Urban Legend is needed to give Madalena and her people the courage to join the fight and tell the boss of the gang to leave. While the hero teams up with the tribe and they appear as one united force at the end, this also reinforces an imperialist idea of a Western savior coming to another land to bring peace. This kind of dynamic also recalls some of the criticism brought forth against Dobson's model of 'ecological citizenship'. The initial agency to counteract illegal deforestation lies in the hands of the character from the Global North, whereas the characters from the Global South are portrayed as the victims who cannot help themselves under their own power (Hayward, 2006).

Aspects of environmental citizenship are also addressed in a paratext at the end of the special issue. On a double-spread that contains information about different issues of climate change and waste pollution, the hero is shown in the center of the double-spread, with a yellow text box underneath him. The text box is entitled "What can you do?" (Yohannes, 2019, unnumbered) and contains ideas for what behaviors can be changed on an individual as well as on a structural level. While the first ideas concern using the car less and instead taking the bicycle or using public transportation, or making sure not to waste electricity, other ideas encourage readers to demand change on an institutional level. This is a civic

behavior that Barry (2006) refers to in his model of 'critical sustainability citizenship'. After confronting readers with issues of climate change and pollution through a narrative, the comic book uses paratexts to communicate more directly with readers and encourages them to transfer the Urban Legend's moral attitude to their own lives. What is interesting about the text box, however, is that the Norwegian version includes one idea that is missing from the English version – encouragement to recycle and thus reduce one's waste.

The special issue of *The Urban Legend* addresses different aspects of environmental citizenship and includes both more liberal and more republican ideas at different points in the story. The hero is portrayed as an environmentally responsible character who is a role model for his students – and, potentially, also for readers. Toward the story's ending, readers are more directly addressed and encouraged to adopt different practices of environmental citizenship, addressing the topic on the fictional as well as the nonfictional level. The tight connection between the storyworld and the paratexts invites readers to transfer some of the insights from the narrative to the actual world.

10.3 One-sided discussions about environmental issues

The special issue of *The Urban Legend* discussed here was written "for a pedagogic purpose" and is aimed at students from elementary to junior high school (The Urban Legend, 2021). According to Joseph Appleyard (1991), plot-driven adventure stories are a typical kind of text for children roughly that age, possibly because "a main reward of reading fictional stories at this age is to satisfy the need to imagine oneself as the central figure who by competence or initiative can solve the problems of a disordered world" (p. 59). This also describes what happens in this comic book. Readers follow along as Malcolm takes the initiative to help a friend in trouble. What is more, he discovers some of the environmental problems in the Amazon and helps to drive out the spider gang by taking initiative as the superhero.

Throughout the comic book, its pedagogic purpose is often very noticeable, especially in the first two parts of the story where the protagonist learns about climate change, about the disappearance of his friend, and about some of the environmental problems in the Amazon. Several of the passages I have discussed in my analysis contain a large amount of 'info-dumping', which can potentially be jarring for readers of the special issue, while at the same time it tries to educate

them. The first case of info-dumping, the documentary shown at the climate conference in Oslo, is an understandable strategy to conveniently introduce the special issue's main topic to readers. However, there are two more situations in the comic book where info-dumping occurs in more obvious and disruptive ways. One of those situations is when Malcolm drives back from the conference in his electric car, which is visibly from the car maker Audi (fig. 10.3). I have already mentioned the absence of any discussion of how electric cars are produced, and it seems obvious that this is because Audi is named as one of the special issue's sponsors on the back cover of the comic book. This also explains why the Audi logo features prominently in two panels on the page in question. This page can, on the one hand, be called a case of info-dumping, but on the other hand, this is also a case where it seems that a specific car brand is shown in a favorable light in the narrative because its manufacturer is an official sponsor of the comic book. Here, one side of the environmental impact of electric cars, which can be deemed important to discuss in a didactic context, is deliberately left out. This must be scrutinized because the comic book has been made for an educational purpose.

The one-sided discussion of electric cars appears again in one of the comic book's paratexts. At the end of the special issue, one double-spread contains information about different aspects concerning climate change. Regarding electric cars, the text states that "Electric cars provide cleaner air and zero emissions of greenhouse gas CO_2 if the electricity is renewable" (Yohannes, 2019, unnumbered). The text again omits the environmentally relevant information that electric cars are *locally* emission free, provided that renewable energy sources are used to charge them. This information text also omits information about the production of electric cars and paints a one-sided picture of this issue and does not include any discussion of the environmentally harmful processes involved in producing electric cars. This appears as even more striking considering another informational text from the same category: "**Norway** is the world leader in the electric car market and almost half of new cars sold are electric cars" (Yohannes, 2019, unnumbered, emphasis in the original). This statement appears potentially problematic, considering that an important piece of information about electric cars is missing. In the worst case, readers might interpret this text as stating that Norway is something of a 'climate hero' because so many electric cars are sold there. This is especially striking because the Norwegian Electric Vehicle Association is listed as another sponsor for the comic book, so this is another case where the topic of electric cars might be presented in a favorable light because of the association

between the comic book and one of its sponsors. In an educational context, this must be called out as problematic.

The information density in the first two parts of the story in particular is very high, bordering, as I argue, on info-dumping. At the same time, since this text is explicitly intended to be used in classrooms, this might give teachers and students the opportunity to discuss a variety of environmentally relevant topics that are touched on in the story. However, considering the one-sidedness of some of the topics discussed, this lays a large amount of responsibility on teachers to provide a more nuanced view on these issues.

Another possible point of criticism that comes with the comic book is that while it is Norwegian, the environmental problems that are discussed are located in South America. This might give the impression that environmental problems are not a part of everyday life in Norway, but rather occur instead in places quite remote for European readers. In the afterword, the author explains that he set the main story in Brazil to "give them [indigenous people – B. H.] a voice and show the world their unique viewpoint" (Yohannes, 2019, unnumbered). However, the representation of the indigenous people in the comic book is heavily influenced by Western perspectives, which can be interpreted as problematic. Madalena's tribe is portrayed in a very traditionalist way. In fact, the first picture that shows the tribe is heavily reminiscent of aerial photos of uncontacted tribes living in the Amazon rainforest. The first impression of Madalena's tribe is, in other words, that of people who do not have much contact with the world community. This raises the question of how the Urban Legend communicates with them, since there is no language barrier between the characters. This suggests that all the characters speak either Portuguese or English. Given how the tribe is depicted, readers might assume that the Urban Legend speaks Portuguese, since it seems unlikely that a supposedly uncontacted tribe would speak English. This can be read as the kind of inconsistency in a narrative that readers can accept according to the 'principle of charity' (Walton, 1990), so as to not disrupt their reading experience. However, Madalena's knowledge of the numbers and statistics when it comes to the pollution of the river and the ocean still poses a potential problem with respect to the depiction of the tribe. The traditionalist depiction clashes starkly with Madalena's Westernized knowledge about pollution. While it is very likely that indigenous tribes know that their environment suffers from pollution, it can be questioned whether they would express that knowledge in quite the same terms as Western science would. In this case, it appears that the tribe does not so much use their own

voice, but that Madalena is in fact conveying knowledge from a Western perspective. This needs to be scrutinized because one stated aim of the comic book is to give indigenous tribes a voice, which arguably does not actually happen. Instead, the tribe is used to teach a Western reading audience according to Western educational practices. Also, the comic book's ending, where the Urban Legend and Matin celebrate their victory over the spider gang with the tribe, can be interpreted as potentially problematic because it appears to be very stereotypical, featuring a large bonfire around which the characters dance together, panpipes (which are often associated with indigenous people from Latin America in general), and an indigenous lucky charm that is given to the hero as a thank you. All these aspects regarding the depiction of the tribe combine to give a heavily Western perspective.

The dynamic that is revealed throughout the comic book is that it has high moral and educational goals on the one hand, while its depiction of those goals turns out to be somewhat problematic on the other hand. The narrative aims to foster readers' understanding of a central problem connected to climate change, namely illegal deforestation in the Amazon rainforest. At the same time, it also conveys much knowledge about other environmental issues, such as plastic pollution, marine pollution, and the use of fossil fuels. However, much of the discussions that the comic book takes up are one-sided or abbreviated in a way that hinders readers' immersion into the story. Instead, several passages of the comic book might give the impression of lecturing readers in a very overt way. The fact that the special issue of *The Urban Legend* raises a variety of environmental issues within a short narrative leads to the comic book coming across as potentially moralizing or even patronizing, which can impede readers' immersion into the storyworld quite heavily.

10.4 Conclusion

In *The Urban Legend*, much of the discussion around aspects of environmental citizenship is connected to the protagonist and his role as a superhero. Structural issues concerning climate change and pollution are addressed throughout the whole narrative, which encourages readers to speak up against environmental injustice and become active members of the political community. This corresponds with the kind of civil disobedience John Barry (2006) discusses as one aspect of 'critical sustainability citizenship'. The comic book tries to encourage readers to act and use their voices against environmental problems and the unsustainable

structures underlying them. In my analysis, I have shown how the comic book uses narrative strategies, as well as paratexts, to convey its message to readers in different forms. In addition to that, the story also conveys some more liberal views on environmental citizenship that focus, for instance, on consumption behavior and one's individual carbon footprint. By addressing environmental problems in different aspects of life and in different places (marine plastic pollution, public protests, illegal deforestation in the Amazon), the comic book paints a picture of the topic's complexity and its relevance on a global scale. By later showing the case of people in the Amazon rainforest, the story brings together a global and a local perspective. Furthermore, it suggests various approaches to addressing the problem.

However, the special issue also displays several problematic aspects regarding one-sided depictions of complex topics such as the production of electric cars. These kinds of abbreviated discussions can appear as problematic in an educational context. Furthermore, the depiction of Madalena and her tribe has some problematic aspects, because of the clash of a traditionalist depiction of the tribe with the Westernized knowledge Madalena conveys. Overall, this portrayal could potentially reinforce imperialist views on indigenous people since it contains many stereotypical elements, especially toward the end of the plot. On a more general level, the comic book's narrative seems to be impeded on the one hand by its outspoken pedagogic purpose, and on the other hand by its imperialist portrayal of indigenous people from the Amazon rainforest. Both factors might be connected to the comic book's shortness. However, since the comic book is outspoken about its pedagogic purpose, it seems like this steers the narrative to an extent that impedes the reading experience.

11 Kari Stai: *Jakob og Neikob: Stormen*

Kari Stai's picture book series *Jakob og Neikob* [*Yesper and Noper*] is a popular Norwegian picturebook series about the two best friends Yesper, who always says yes, and Noper, who always says no. Seven stories about the contrary friends were published between 2008 and 2022.[106] The picturebooks play on the friends' oppositional personalities and are generally characterized by a simplistic and geometrical aesthetic. Visually, the picturebooks are characterized by their strong colors and surrealist impression of the world Yesper and Noper inhabit. The pictures have a collage style and seem to include papercut figures, which gives them a playful touch. The picturebooks, which are written in Nynorsk, contain only small amounts of verbal text, often located at the margins of the pictures. The verbal text in *Yesper and Noper* is characterized by nonsense humor and wordplay, where set expressions are often taken literally. Here, the interplay between words and pictures is especially close because the literal realization of wordplay is often taken up on the visual level.

In *Stormen* [*The Storm*], from 2019, the protagonists meet Spinnvill [Screwloose], who can make everything in her factory. They throw away their old belongings but accumulate so many new things that they cannot even sleep in their house. When a storm comes and blows the friends away, Yesper and Noper discover that the Earth has become a giant landfill and learn that they need to change their behavior to protect their environment. *The Storm* has 16 unnumbered double-spreads with 14 pictures stretching over both pages and two double-spreads with one picture on each side. The cover shows the protagonists and the titular storm in form of a grey cloud with an angry-looking face. The factory in the background indicates a connection between it, the storm, and the protagonists, who are holding on to their hats. The general theme of humans' impact on the environment is visible on both the textual and the visual level, and it is also being hinted at in one of the paratexts, the dedication "*Til Greta T.*" ["*To Greta T.*"], which likely refers to Greta Thunberg. Her public action from 2018 resulted in the "Fridays for Future" movement that is concerned with the ongoing climate crisis. Since its beginnings, Greta Thunberg's engagement in this activist movement has been having a perceptible impact on the publication of children's and young adult

[106] Three of the six picturebooks about Yesper and Noper have so far been translated into English. The names of the characters are taken from Hagen Agency's website, where a summary of the picturebook I discuss in this chapter is available in English (Eirin Hagen Literary Agency, 2022).

literature about the environment (Ferguson, 2019). *The Storm* can be understood as a picturebook influenced by this action.

Nature, as an important theme in the picturebook, is also addressed in the design of the book's endpapers. Both in the front and in the back, they display different kinds of flowers in red and blue against a white background. Their realistic shapes set the flowers on the endpapers apart from most of the flowers depicted throughout the picturebook, except for those on the very last double-spread, which are of the same type as those shown on the endpapers. The red and blue colors on the endpapers mirror the colors of the protagonists, who are clothed in red and blue. Furthermore, while the pictures in the narrative feature a collage style, the flowers on the endpapers seem to be stamped. This underlines their difference and creates a tension between the endpapers and the narrative contained between them, which is characterized by an artificial style. Ultimately, this hints at the picturebook's central conflict between nature and culture (Moe, 2019).

Unlike the other works I examine in my project, *The Storm* has, since its publication, been discussed in relation to environmental topics in an academic context. In an article about climate change in Nordic picturebooks, Reinhard Hennig (2021a) discusses the text in relation to local and global perspectives on climate change. In an article from the same year, Häbler and Elisenberg (2021) use *The Storm* as an example "to show how picture books, along with conversations about these books, can invite young readers to enjoy nature and increase awareness of sustainable development" (p. 124). The authors focus on how pollution is depicted in Stai's picturebook. In an anthology entitled *Elevene og litteraturen. Estetisk lesing på barnetrinnet*, I have published a shorter version of my analysis of *The Storm* in this thesis, where I discuss aspects of environmental citizenship, as well as more practical perspectives on how the picturebook can be included in an educational context in the classroom (Huntebrinker, 2022).

11.1 Nature as an active participant in the storyworld

The first double-spread of *The Storm* introduces the main characters and their home, and hints at themes that will be important throughout the narrative (fig. 11.1). Readers learn that Yesper always says "YES" and Noper always says "NO", a characteristic that is reflected in the protagonists' names. Yesper is displayed on the left half of the picture, with a red smiling face, blue clothing, a white bow tie and a blue bobble hat. Noper is on the right side of the picture, the corners of his

mouth pointing down and the color of his face blue[107] with red clothing. In contrast to his best friend, Noper wears a white tie and a red top hat that matches his clothes. Overall, the two protagonists appear as "stylized contrasts" (Birkeland, Risa, et al., 2018, p. 326, my translation) that at the same time complement each other. This is not only due to their color-coding, but their hats are also reminiscent of puzzle pieces, and even the sizes of their faces correspond with each other. Furthermore, the protagonists are drawn in a highly simplified way, which gives them quite unrealistic features, but also makes them easily recognizable and facilitates readers' identification with the characters (McCloud, 1993, pp. 36–37). The simplistic narrative style also makes the narrative itself adaptable regarding where and at what time it might take place. All of this makes the narrative more easily accessible for children.

In the background behind Noper is a hill with a house on top, which is where the friends live. In the middle of the picture is a big yellow sun with white rays, emphasizing the good weather. Over on the left side, behind Yesper, is a small factory with a column of smoke coming out of one of its two chimneys. The smoke rises along the left edge of the picture and along the top edge, occluding a small part of the sun. This first double-spread establishes some of the main themes the narrative explores. The topic of the relationship between humans and nature – and especially humans' impact on nature – is taken up on the visual level. On the right, in front of the house, small white flowers are stretching toward the sun. On the left, next to the factory, the same kind of flower is bent to the ground and colored in black, which indicates its unhealthy condition. Here, readers are invited to start making connections between the left and the right side of the picture and to explore the visual level of the storyworld. Yesper's and Noper's oppositional characters are illustrated with an example: " – Nice weather today, says Yesper. – NO, says Noper" (Stai, 2019, ds. 1, verso).[108] The protagonists' different view on the weather also highlights their opposing views of the world. The positioning of the characters in the picture illustrates their attitude: Yesper on the left does not see the factory and its smoke, since both are located behind him, while Noper seems to face the factory. For him, the nice weather is literally clouded by the smoke from the factory.

[107] Noper's blue face color also correlates with his mood, as "feeling blue" is a figurative way of saying someone is sad.

[108] [Norwegian original: «– Fint vêr I dag, seier Jakob. – NEI, seier Neikob.» (Stai, 2019, ds. 1, verso).]

The plot starts to unfold as the protagonists tend the garden in front of their house. The house and the garden could already be seen on the previous double-spread, which makes it easy for readers to locate where the story is now beginning to unfold and perform a deictic shift into the picturebook's storyworld. Screwloose, who plays an important role in the narrative, "rushes by" (Stai, 2019, ds. 2, verso)[109] on her way to the factory. She appears as an otherworldly character: instead of legs, she has wheels; she has four arms, in one picture even six; and her head is both unusually large and an oval shape. Her body is an orange rectangle, and she has large eyes with long eyelashes, and a large smile (both the eyes and the smile extend beyond her head), but no hair. Screwloose's attitude toward her environment quickly becomes apparent: "Such nice flowers you have, she says and stomps around in the flowerbed" (Stai, 2019, ds. 2, verso).[110] Not only does her expressed appreciation for the flowers not match her behavior, but she also fails to notice her inconsiderate attitude: it is Noper who corrects her and says that they "had" (Stai, 2019, ds. 2, verso)[111] beautiful flowers, pointing to the fact that they are now destroyed. In opposition to Screwloose, Noper shows himself early on to be considerate of his environment.

The overall otherworldly impression Screwloose conveys is solidified further when she "chirps" (Stai, 2019, ds. 2, verso)[112] that she can make new flowers in the factory, clearly not considering the destruction of the flowers a loss. Her response introduces an attitude that focuses on the replaceability of things in general, which leads to devaluing the things that already exist and eliminates the need to maintain them. With the turn of the page, Screwloose comes back to Yesper and Noper with four huge flowers that have aquamarine-colored stems and pink and purple blossoms. Yesper, who holds one cut-off white flower from the garden in his right hand and lifts his arms as if welcoming the flowers, seems happy about the replacement, while Noper expresses displeasure.

The beginning of the story takes up a central theme in the picturebook, which is humans' alienation from nature. This alienation seems to be connected to the notion of industrialization, given that Screwloose, who seems otherworldly, works at a factory, and can easily replace things, appears as a character without

[109] [Norwegian original: «Spinnvill fyk forbi på veg til fabrikken.» (Stai, 2019, ds. 2, verso).]

[110] [Norwegian original: «– Så fine blomster de har, seier ho og trakkar rett i blomsterbedet.» (Stai, 2019, ds. 2, verso).]

[111] [Norwegian original: «Hadde» (Stai, 2019, ds. 2, verso).]

[112] [Norwegian original: «kvitrar» (Stai, 2019, ds. 2, verso).]

any connection with her environment, while the protagonists (and especially Noper) are presented as living in a way that is more in tune with their surroundings. This recalls Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in which he argues for a connection between industrialization and humans' alienation from nature (Benjamin, 1970). Screwloose's detachment from nature is emphasized further when the three characters are in the factory, where she produces a whole line of new cars for Yesper and Noper. This double-spread contrasts with the previous pages, not least because it is the only one in the picturebook that solely shows the inside of a building, which visually underlines a detachment from nature. Screwloose, who is displayed in the center of the double-spread and appears much bigger than Yesper and Noper, is most clearly the focus of attention in this chaotic picture. Additionally, the factory conveys a futuristic impression because levers, displays, and assembly lines dominate the picture, while the function of the instruments is unclear. Here, readers are invited to imagine what purpose the different devices may serve using knowledge they have from the actual world by means of the 'principle of minimal departure' (Ryan, 1991).

After receiving their new car, Yesper asks Screwloose whether she can really make "anything imaginable" (Stai, 2019, ds. 5, recto),[113] to which she says, "anything imaginable in the blink of an eye" (Stai, 2019, ds. 5, recto).[114] The turn of the page realizes this "blink of an eye" and the next page reveals that Screwloose has indeed made all sorts of things. Interestingly, however, none of the objects she brings to the car are recognizable, but they are different strange shapes in pastel colors of yellow, blue, and multiple shades of pink. This underlines the notion of 'stuff' in the sense of things that take up space without serving a specific purpose. The amount of stuff the protagonists accumulate quickly gets out of control and leads to them throwing out everything they had owned before. The corresponding double-spread shows the friends' house in the middle of the picture, and two cars full of stuff on the left. On the right-hand side, Yesper and Noper are shown at the windows, throwing things out of their house. Interestingly, the things they throw out all have clearly recognizable shapes, underlining that the stuff Screwloose has made is quite useless. This contrast is taken up in the structure of the double-spread where the old things are displayed on the recto and the new stuff on the verso page.

[113] [Norwegian original: «kan du verkeleg lage alt mogleg?» (Stai, 2019, ds. 5, recto).]

[114] [Norwegian original: «Alt mogleg på ein blunk» (Stai, 2019, ds. 5, recto).]

The right side of the picture resembles a busy picture and invites readers to step back from the progression of the plot to discover all the things that are being thrown out. Readers can find a humorous note in the bottom right corner, where a character from another story, *Yesper and Noper: The Thief Strikes Back* (2012), is among the things that get thrown away.

This is not the only mise en abyme in this picturebook. Later, when Yesper and Noper look at the world from a cardboard plane in which the storm carries them, they see a landscape full of stuff, among which there are some recognizable shapes (fig. 11.2). One of them is a building with an imperial roof, which may be read as the house of the protagonists' neighbor in *Yesper and Noper: The Neighbor* (2016). Several other works of the series also employ mise en abyme situations, like in *Yesper and Noper and Everyone Else* (2018), where the bus driver is the thief from *The Thief Strikes Back*. The thief is a character who appears multiple times. In the very first picturebook in the series, he steals Yesper and Noper's car. This strategy supports the building of a global storyworld that is not contained in one single story, but instead surrounds the main characters and gives their adventures a bigger context. Child readers especially are invited to draw connections between the Yesper and Noper narratives that increase their immersiveness.

Apart from the neighbor's house, the lower edge of the picture displays both a factory and the protagonists' house with the plastic flowers in front of it, facilitating readers' orientation. On the right side, a grey object in a shape recalls the Eiffel Tower, which does suggest a larger context and connects the storyworld to the actual world, hinting at pollution not only as an issue in the picturebook, but as a problem that also exists outside the realm of fiction. In the background of the picture, there are also two more columns of smoke, in addition to those from the factory Yesper and Noper visited. At several places in the landscape, various types of trees from different climate regions can be seen. All this underlines that what they are observing is in fact a global problem. The picture does, however, potentially suggest that the problem of pollution is the same everywhere. From a postcolonial perspective, this is a problematic assumption, given the unequal distribution of responsibility for overconsumption and pollution. Keeping this aspect in mind, the picture does convey a sense of a global problem for both child and adult readers, even though it does not account for the unjust distribution of wealth and environmental problems on the planet.

In this scene, Yesper and Noper feel estranged from their home and even wonder whether they have come to the wrong planet. Noper asks Yesper whether he sees what has happened and Yesper answers "YES, I see" (Stai, 2019, ds. 12, verso).[115] The original Norwegian text – "Eg ser" – can be read as an intertextual reference to the famous poem "Jeg ser" ["I look"] by Sigbjørn Obstfelder, originally published in 1893. The poem is an important text in Norwegian modernism and has as its central topic the subject who is estranged from the urban world. Another question from Noper – "Have we come to the wrong planet?" (Stai, 2019, ds. 12, verso)[116] – further evokes Obstfelder's poem, in which the lyric I also observes, "Jeg er vist kommet på en feil klode!" (Obstfelder, 2001, p. 16) ["I must be on the wrong planet!", (Obstfelder, 2008, p. 839)]. The reference to "Jeg ser" emphasizes the increasing alienation from nature that the protagonists go through, but that they fail to notice until the storm explicitly addresses it. Furthermore, the intertextual reference also points to the connection between Yesper's and Noper's alienation from nature and industrialization that I already mentioned in the beginning of the chapter.

After having learned their lesson, Yesper and Noper return to the factory in their cardboard plane (fig. 11.3). The environment around the factory is visibly suffering as a result of the smoke coming out of the chimneys. Some of the pastel shapes next to the factory have faces that look sad or shocked. The collage style is particularly distinct in this picture. The smoke's texture contrasts starkly with the rest of the picture. In opposition to the other things displayed, and in opposition to the color style in the rest of the picturebook, the smoke seems to be printed and then combined with the rest of the picture. This foregrounds that the smoke is not a natural part of the storyworld's environment. The evilness of the factory is further emphasized by its windows, which have a red and a yellow circle around their black center and look like the eyes of a wicked creature.

The Storm displays the environment as a highly active participant in the picturebook's storyworld. The shifting weather constantly comments on and evaluates the development of the narrated events. After Screwloose brings the artificial flowers to Yesper and Noper, the sky gradually darkens, and eventually, it starts to rain and snow. As the friends bring their new stuff home, one white cloud appears in the sky. It catches readers' attention because it is placed centrally,

[115] [Norwegian original: «– JA, eg ser.» (Stai, 2019, ds. 12, verso).]

[116] [Norwegian original: «Har vi kome på feil klode?» (Stai, 2019, ds. 12, verso).]

is a much lighter color than the other clouds, and has an angry face. As the protagonists throw out their belongings, the color of the sky darkens further and the cloud with the face becomes darker, bigger, and angrier. The tipping point is reached when Yesper and Noper want to sleep: the sky has gradually become black and the angry cloud has grown to a storm with a complete body made of clouds and a small grey top hat, suggesting that the storm is male.[117] The anthropomorphized appearance of the storm makes him more easily understandable for child readers and makes it potentially easier to understand how nature can now directly communicate with the protagonists.

The storm makes a deep impression on Yesper and Noper as he shows them the consequences of their environmentally harmful behavior. In a conversation with the storm, the two friends are sitting on the storm's lap to reflect on their behavior, foregrounding the storm's moral superiority and presenting him as a father-like, trustworthy figure and the moral voice that teaches others a lesson. However, it is mostly Yesper and Noper who speak, after the storm asks them whether they realize what they have done. After seeing the consequences of their behavior, Yesper and Noper do not need much guidance from the storm to conclude that they need to change something. However, the storm's action is needed to start a thought process that leads the friends to environmental insight. The positive change that is going on is also reflected in the sky, which is no longer black, but purple with an orange sunrise. This amplifies the feeling that the negative development of the narrative is now over.

The commenting function of nature is also taken up in the small white flowers that can be found throughout the narrative. In the first picture, the white flowers in front of Yesper's and Noper's house and the small black bent-over flower in front of the factory introduce the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy environment. After Screwloose stops by in the beginning of the story, only one white flower remains in front of the house. On their way home with the new stuff, while it starts to rain, there is one small black bent-over flower by the road, silently commenting on the development of the situation. This becomes apparent in the end, when the work of tidying up reveals several white flowers underneath the stuff. The tidying leads to an improvement in the environment's condition, which becomes clearly visible through the white flowers. Especially when viewed in contrast to the colorful artificial flowers Screwloose brings from

[117] This also correlates with the grammatical gender of the word "storm" in Norwegian.

the factory, the small white flowers can be read as indicators of purity and innocence. After meeting Screwloose and getting the plastic flowers, Yesper and Noper lose their purity and innocence to a large degree and only regain it when they clean up. The single white flower in front of the house that survives throughout the narrative might stand for Noper disapproving of Yesper's and Screwloose's decisions.[118]

The weather indicates distinct areas of interaction between the characters and their environment. On the one hand, the storyworld reacts to what happens in the story that focuses on the main characters and their actions. On the other hand, it also interacts with readers and opens the narrative up for an interpretation that goes beyond what the main plot about Yesper and Noper communicates through its verbal text and through what happens in the foreground. It also invites readers to relate the connection between Yesper's and Noper's actions and the bad weather to the actual world, to understand how environmentally neglectful behavior leads to environmental degradation. Throughout the longer part of the picturebook, the environment establishes a second narrative that silently comments on what happens between Yesper, Noper, and Screwloose. At the tipping point, the two stories merge, and the weather interacts with Yesper and Noper visually and verbally as the storm. Attentive readers might, however, have observed the storm brewing long before it takes away Yesper and Noper.

All this activity in the environmental storyworld shows the protagonists' entanglement in their surroundings and that what they do cannot be regarded as isolated from the storyworld they inhabit. Material decisions cannot be considered as separated from other beings, be they a part of flora or fauna. This is also the knowledge that Yesper and Noper gain under the moral guidance of the storm. Much like the negative development of the narrative is reflected in the weather and the condition of the flowers, so are the positive changes that happen toward the end. Nature visibly appreciates the positive change in the characters' behavior. The storyworld in *The Storm* communicates quite clearly with the readers to help them

[118] Reading the flowers as a sign of the existence or loss of purity also makes it possible to interpret the narrative as a variation on original sin, where the metaphoric 'fruit' that brings about Yesper's and Noper's downfall is consumption. The fact that the protagonists are in their garden at the beginning of the narrative supports this reading, in which the storm functions as the male, punishing God after Yesper, who can be read as Eve, and Noper, who can be read as Adam, have been seduced by Screwloose, who appears as the snake in the story.

imagine and understand how nature and our own personal decisions are interwoven with each other.

11.2 Overconsumption and alienation from nature

The narrative engages with aspects of environmental citizenship mainly through a critique of consumer culture that operates on various levels. Both the main verbal text and the parallel commentary in the visual narrative take up this topic.

Screwloose brings consumerism into the lives of Yesper and Noper, and it seems to be mostly thanks to Yesper's attitude of agreeing with everything that she is able to have such a significant impact on the protagonists. Interestingly, consumption is not something that the friends already have in their lives, but rather it is introduced from the outside. Screwloose's overall attitude illustrates an underlying conflict between natural and artificial beauty, in which Screwloose seems to follow what Adorno calls Kant's (and later Schiller's and Hegel's) "concept of freedom and human dignity", where "nothing in the world is worthy of attention except that for which the autonomous subject has itself to thank" (Adorno, 2002, p. 62). However, while Yesper, conforming to his character, agrees with Screwloose ("YES, that's what I call flowers"; Stai, 2019, ds. 3, verso),[119] Noper, also conforming to his character, disagrees: "NO, that's what I call plastic" (Stai, 2019, ds. 3, verso).[120] Noper appears as the more attentive character here, seeing beyond the eye-catching size and color of the flowers, and drawing a terminological distinction between actual flowers and flower-shaped objects made of plastic.

Another important characteristic of Screwloose's is her dominant personality that manifests in a tendency to ignore other opinions. This also becomes clear in opposition to Noper, who initially offers resistance against getting many new things – something that Screwloose ignores more than once. Instead, she takes everything that Yesper and Noper say as an invitation to produce more things, while being heedless of any displeasure that might come from this. Strikingly, Noper is silent while Screwloose dumps all the new stuff into the new cars and helps them take everything home, which emphasizes her dominance. Instead of reflecting on whether it is necessary for Yesper and Noper to have all

[119] [Norwegian original: «– JA, dette kallar eg blomster» (Stai, 2019, ds. 3, verso).]

[120] [Norwegian original: «– NEI, dette kallar eg plast» (Stai, 2019, ds. 3, verso).]

the new things, Screwloose comments that they are lucky she made so many new cars so they can transport all the new stuff. But while Screwloose is positive about all the new cars, the weather has gotten visibly worse, and it starts to rain. Obviously, the weather disagrees with Screwloose.

It becomes evident in the picturebook that Screwloose's name is closely connected to her behavior. "Screwloose" alludes to the expression of having 'a loose screw', meaning someone is, or is acting, a little silly. However, her Norwegian name "Spinnvill" alludes to a different quality. The name "Spinnvill" suggests that something (or in this case, someone) is spinning wildly, is out of control, which accords with the fact that she is absolutely unable to maintain moderation in her production of new things. And while Screwloose does seem to be able to change to a certain degree in the end, her mindset has arguably not completely changed. While tidying up the meadow in front of the factory, Yesper says "Natural flowers in a long blink of an eye" (Stai, 2019, ds. 15, recto),[121] which refers back to Screwloose being able to make everything "in the blink of an eye". However, Screwloose objects that these natural flowers will eventually die. While she agrees with the idea of tidying up, she has not yet learned that the fact that natural flowers die is not necessarily a disadvantage. Yesper's attitude, however, has changed: "YES, says Yesper. – That is how nature is. Fortunately" (Stai, 2019, ds. 15, recto).[122] He has understood that nature exists on its own timescale and that it has an intrinsic value. Here, it becomes evident that the picturebook opposes a view of nature as property, which is criticized in many approaches to environmental citizenship where nature is seen as having an intrinsic value, as foregrounded by Michel Serres (2011), for example.

Another concept that critiques consumption is the use of the word "nothing" ["ingenting"]. This comes first to readers' attention when Yesper and Noper are outside of the factory and Yesper wants to throw out the boxes the cars came in. Noper disagrees and wants to keep one box because it is not empty, but rather full of nothing. He explains to Yesper that "nothing is space to breathe and scrimmage" (Stai, 2019, ds. 5, recto).[123] The meaning of nothing is taken literally in the sense that nothing is 'no thing', which is needed nonetheless because it gives space.

[121] [Norwegian original: «Naturlege blomster på ein lang blunk» (Stai, 2019, ds. 15, recto).] This is the only time the word "natural" is used in the picture book. This accentuates the fact that Yesper has indeed undergone a quite fundamental change and is now able to differentiate between natural and other flowers.

[122] [Norwegian original: «– JA, seier Jakob. – Slik er naturen. Heldigvis» (Stai, 2019, ds. 15, recto).]

[123] [Norwegian original: «Ingenting er boltreplass og pusterom» (Stai, 2019, ds. 5, recto).]

Eventually, the box turns out to be the only place where the protagonists can sleep after they have filled their house with their new stuff. As Noper notices, the house is "empty – of nothing" (Stai, 2019, ds. 9, verso).[124] The perspective on what 'full' and 'empty' can mean is played with and the different perspectives of Yesper and Noper are emphasized through these small discussions surrounding "nothing". As Yesper and Noper gain environmental insight, Yesper realizes that they need more of "nothing". As the two get back to the factory, they tell Screwloose that they need nothing, which – unsurprisingly – she does not know how to make, so Noper takes control. In the last picture, where he is sitting on top of a control board, the text says that "Noper is busy in the factory. Busy making nothing. Because he knows what buttons he should *not* push" (Stai, 2019, ds. 16, verso, emphasis in the original).[125] This takes up the question of different perspectives again, because while Noper is seemingly doing nothing, just sitting on top of the control board and looking out the window, the text says that he is in fact busy making nothing. His inactivity gains a productive and positive quality, and it gives nature more space again, which is represented through the flowers and the small animals in front of and inside the factory.

The factory itself is another topic that needs consideration, as it is the place where the protagonists experience an alienation from nature that ultimately leads to the coming of the storm. The factory is associated with the otherworldly and machine-like Screwloose. The double-spread that shows her working in the factory strengthens her connection to this strange and futuristic place that differs considerably from Yesper's and Noper's usual surroundings. Furthermore, it sets Screwloose distinctly apart from nature and reflects, as mentioned earlier, Walter Benjamin's argument of humans' alienation from nature being closely connected to the process of industrialization (Benjamin, 1970). The transition away from nature is very clear in this indoors picture that excludes anything disconnected from human production. The alienation from nature is taken up again on the last double-spread, where Noper sits at the control board and nature has apparently regained its health. The inclusion of small animals and a greater variety of flowers in this final picture indicate that Yesper's and Noper's alienation from nature has finally decreased again. This is directly linked to the factory being shut down,

[124] [Norwegian original: «det er tomt – for ingenting» (Stai, 2019, ds.9. verso).]

[125] [Norwegian original: «Samtidig har Neikob det travelt i fabrikken. Travelt med å lage ingenting. Han veit nemleg kva for knappar han *ikkje* skal trykke på» (Stai, 2019, ds. 16, verso).]

which again takes up the connection Benjamin draws between humans' alienation from nature and industrialization. A remarkable feature in this picture is that Noper is smiling, which is quite unusual for him and therefore supports the criticism of consumption that runs through the narrative.

Civic actions and responsibilities are closely related to consumption and its effects on the environment in this picturebook. Screwloose and Noper in particular represent opposing perspectives on citizenship and on how one's surroundings should be treated. In this narrative, Yesper appears as content with his living situation, but his approving attitude also leaves him open to Screwloose's influence and ultimately leads to the intervention of the storm.

In the beginning, Yesper and Noper appear as regular, unremarkable citizens who look after their garden. Screwloose's visit and the ensuing conflict regarding the flowers show that Yesper is a much more naïve character than Noper. Screwloose's attitude quickly starts to dominate the lives of Yesper and Noper and leads to immense environmental problems. As already observed, her worldview does not naturally reside in the friends' lives. Screwloose embodies a consumption-oriented attitude that corresponds in its basic characteristics to neoliberalism, the dominant political-economic system in most Western countries. The influence she and the factory gain over the storyworld can be understood in terms of the changes that Benito Cao (2015) observes regarding the connection between neoliberalism and citizenship. He argues that since international corporations have gained status as legal persons, they have changed what Cao calls "the traditional dyad (individual – government) to the neoliberal triad (individual – government – corporation)" (p. 64). Cao even sees "potential for a new, neoliberal dyad to emerge as central to the future of citizenship: individual – corporation" (p. 64). This is also the kind of dyad that emerges in *The Storm*, where a governmental institution does not appear, but the factory starts to have a fundamental impact on the protagonists' lives. In light of this, Yesper's and Noper's development into unecological citizens can be read as a transformation into what Cao calls "consumer citizens", where citizenship is transformed into consumption (Cao, 2015, p. 64). This is the case for Yesper and Noper, whose actions in *The Storm* are connected to consumption from the moment Screwloose stops by their house.

These structures are of course taken up in highly simplified ways. For example, although Yesper's and Noper's consumption plays a central role in the narrative, it remains unclear how they can afford all the new things, since money

does not appear in the picturebook. At the same time, this also shows that the focus of the narrative is not on overconsumption and the neoliberal system as a whole, but rather one of its central negative traits, which becomes evident as the key conflict in the narrative: the neglect of the environment. Throughout *The Storm*, it is nature who pays the price for Screwloose's uncontrolled production, until nature cannot bear it anymore and fights back in the form of the storm. It is telling how easily Screwloose's lifestyle rubs off on Yesper and Noper and how quickly it comes to dominate their life. Up until the point at which the storm intervenes, there is no consideration of possible negative consequences of this maximalist lifestyle, and any concerns from Noper's side are plainly ignored. This illustrates the extremely dominant character of the neoliberal economy.

The key concepts of environmental citizenship that are addressed in *The Storm* include individual responsibility for the environment and the intrinsic value of nature, with the former being more strongly emphasized than the latter. The tight correlation between Yesper's and Noper's consumption that leads to the pollution of the planet and the following redemption through the cleanup suggests Dobson's concept of ecological citizenship (Dobson, 2003) and its connection to the ecological footprint. Yesper and Noper go from being unecological citizens to being ecological citizens by reducing their consumption and their shopping behavior. Furthermore, the double-spread that displays a panoramic view of how the planet has become a landfill (fig. 11.2) accentuates how the friends' behavior has global consequences and points to the idea of post-cosmopolitanism. The main reason for this is that Yesper and Noper did not see the impact of their behavior at home – but they can see it from far away and in another place. Although the two are actually not very far away from home, as their house is still visible in the picture, they get to see a larger area that spans several mountains and possibly even other parts of Europe. The fact that they can see the impact of their lifestyle not at home but in another place is suggestive of the fundamental injustice that informs Dobson's concept of post-cosmopolitanism.

After having learned their lesson, Yesper and Noper talk to Screwloose to bring about a change. Since Screwloose does not seem to understand the concept of producing less, they tell her that they need a new thing. This gets Screwloose's attention, unlike when she doesn't listen to Noper's concerns earlier. However, the new thing the friends need is "nothing", which Screwloose does not know how to make, since "nothing" cannot be produced in the same way as all the stuff she has been making. What Yesper and Noper achieve here is that they use their voice as

consumers to demand change. This corresponds to the general idea of the citizen's power to vote with their wallet, which originates from classical market theory (Cao, 2015, p. 67). In this case, Yesper and Noper not only vote with their wallets, but they actively seek out a conversation with the producer Screwloose to tell her what they want more of in their lives. The method of their conversation with Screwloose resembles in its structure the strategy of using a double negative. The result of their action turns out to go a step further than simply voting with their wallet. The situation in the end can be described in terms of John Barry's concept of 'critical sustainability citizenship', which demands changes to the larger unsustainable structures, as well as civic engagement in conservation (Barry, 2006). Yesper and Noper do bring about structural change, in that they achieve a shutdown of the factory and thus prevent more harmful smoke and unnecessary stuff from coming into the world.

The concluding clearing of the meadow in front of the factory appears as another basic civic duty that many approaches to environmental citizenship include. Not polluting and removing waste from the environment are fundamental ideas of several approaches to environmental citizenship. Most models include recycling as one of the very basic civic activities to reduce waste, which is another strategy seen in this picturebook. However, Yesper's and Noper's first approach to recycling seems to be quite shallow, given that they simply throw all their things out of the window. Technically speaking, this is not what is meant by recycling. It is true that in the most literal sense of the word, Yesper and Noper do re-cycle – or re-circulate ["resirkulere" in Norwegian] – their belongings. To circulate means "to hand or pass round" or "to put into circulation, […] put about, diffuse" ("Circulate", 2022), which is what the friends do by throwing their things out the window. They pass them from their house to the dip next to it. Compared to that, the cleanup at the end seems much more thorough. This development is mirrored in the fact that some of the shapes are now recognizable as a table, a to-go cup with a lid and a straw, and possibly several bags. This shows that a thought process has been initiated.

In *The Storm*, the understanding of citizenship changes throughout the narrative from a heavily consumption-orientated model of citizenship to an environmentally responsible one that does not focus on maximizing one's possessions. Consumption and environmental problems are closely associated with each other, and less consumption equals a healthier (and happier) condition of nature. The direct connection between Yesper's and Noper's shopping behavior

and problems with the environment can be linked to Dobson's model of ecological citizenship. The main civic practices foregrounded in this narrative are recycling and reducing one's consumption. Both of those activities happen mostly on an individual level. It is the protagonists who change their behavior, which solves the situation with the storm. Locating the responsibility for change heavily in the individual level corresponds especially with liberally oriented models of environmental citizenship. Virtually all of them include some form of individual responsibility for action. However, *The Storm* also addresses the consumption problem on a structural level through the character Screwloose. As became clear, she appears as neoliberalism personified and her dominance over Yesper's and Noper's lives mirrors neoliberalism's dominance in Western cultures. What makes the narrative versatile in its treatment of consumption and the transition to ecological citizenship is that the protagonists use their voices to bring about a change on a structural level. By going to the factory and putting an end to Screwloose's uncontrolled production, individual and collective responsibilities are combined. Thereby, the narrative foregrounds how both areas, and the connection between them, are important if humans' relationship to their environment is to change. It is also clear in the narrative that more environmentally friendly behavior is preferable. This can mostly be seen through the weather, which evaluates the story and its development. In addition, the fact that Noper smiles in the last picture of the narrative also strongly underlines the positive change that has happened throughout the picturebook, since this an exceptionally rare event.

Civic practices and behaviors are generally taken up in their basic structures in this picturebook. However, the theme of how individuals live together and live in an environment is addressed as the main topic of the narrative. This relates to the thought that citizens are not born but *made* through education, which is expressed by Patrick Curry (2000), among others, in his approach to 'ecological republicanism'.

11.3 Wordplay and contrasts

The reading age for *The Storm* is indicated as being from three to six years (Samlaget, 2020), so it can be assumed that the picturebook is to be read by a child and an adult together. Both the visual and the verbal level contain didactic potential that encourages different conversations between adult and child readers and between them and the text. The narrative addresses its double audience at various

moments. This leads to some humorous situations and additionally opens the text up for conversations between child and adult readers. The picturebook is characterized by its playful atmosphere both on the visual and the verbal level. Overall, the picturebook exemplifies what J. A. Appleyard ascribes to "the reader as player", a role he attributes to child readers before they start at school or are able to read. He writes that "the child […] becomes a confident player in a fantasy world that images realities, fears, and desires" (Appleyard, 1991, p. 14). The highly stylized storyworld in *The Storm* displays fantastic features and takes up the topic of fear when the protagonists are carried away by the storm. Play is also taken up on a more literal level, given the many instances of wordplay in the picturebook. In this picturebook, there is no clear indication as to who readers are most invited to identify with. Instead, I argue that readers are invited to sometimes identify more with Yesper's perspective on the world, and other times with Noper's. In this sense, readers are encouraged to playfully evaluate their perspective while the story progresses, although the character development and the positive ending contain clear moral guidelines for readers.

Much didactic potential in the narrative is related to its core themes: consumption and environmental problems. For example, when Noper says that he calls the artificial flowers "plastic", the text invites readers to think about what this implies, because the discussion about the flowers does not go further. Rather, the invitation to ponder the subject of plastic is emphasized by the arrangement of the text in the corresponding picture: The verbal text is separated into two parts that have different topics. The upper part talks about the new flowers, while the lower part leads over to the factory. Noper's statement that he calls the flowers plastic is the last sentence in the upper paragraph and is placed directly above the new flowers Screwloose holds in her hand, so a literal gap emerges here.

In *The Storm*, Noper is the character whose attitude is presented as clearly preferable. This is quite interesting, considering that he is usually the more negative one. In other picturebooks, the fundamentally different perspectives of Yesper and Noper create funny situations, where both are sometimes right and sometimes wrong. Here, however, the more nuanced perspective on things that Noper represents seems to be desirable, and suggests a higher level of reflection, which is proposed to lead to a more positive relationship with the environment. This also implies that, with regard to environmental issues, there is no middle ground between consumption and environmentally friendly behavior – and the latter is unmistakably presented as more desirable than the former. As the plot of

The Storm progresses, readers are invited to playfully discover and understand how Yesper's acquiescent attitude might facilitate the negative development of things, and why Noper's attitude might be the more desirable one in this case.

What is interesting is that a large part of the picturebook tells a story that unfolds exclusively on a visual level and runs parallel to the main verbal narrative until the storm intervenes and the narratives merge. The visual narrative offers many opportunities for discussing what is happening on the nonverbal level, which gives child readers much competence and power to engage in communication with the picturebook even without the ability to read the verbal text unaided. Firstly, the development that leads to the storm's appearance is not foreshadowed in the verbal text, but is explicitly indicated in the visual narrative. This gives less advanced readers the opportunity to see a development that is concealed in the verbal text. This competence that is given to less advanced readers might encourage a deeper engagement with the narrative. Furthermore, the reactions of the environment to the positive and negative changes in Yesper's and Noper's lifestyles are made immediately understandable even to those who are unable to read. Nature and its agency are detached from the *logos,* as those actions and reactions happen outside of the realm of human language, in the visual narrative. It is only at the end of their encounter with the storm that he briefly speaks to the protagonists. The key lesson is therewith translated into human language. This can be connected to the fact that it is humans who must reflect and think about – and eventually change – their behavior toward nature. Even outside of the key discussion between the storm and the protagonists, nature continuously speaks an explicit (visual) language.

Other situations where figures of speech are taken literally are less closely connected to the thematic topic of the picturebook, but still invite readers to go deeper into the narrative and discuss, for example, what "all things imaginable" means and how Screwloose interprets this. Also, the general construction of Yesper and Noper as opposites that belong together often opens the narrative up for discussing different perspectives on a certain situation or thing. On the very first double-spread, for example, Yesper says "Nice weather today" (Stai, 2019, ds. 1, verso)[126] and Noper disagrees. While that introduces the main characters and their most striking characteristics – saying "YES" and saying "NO" to everything – it also gives the opportunity to think and talk about why Yesper might think the weather is nice and why Noper disagrees with that. Their way of articulating clear

[126] [Norwegian original: «– Fint vêr I dag» (Stai, 2019, ds. 1, verso).]

positions on everything allows readers to see things from two very different positions, and as a consequence to discuss those positions and discover what may lie in between them.

Much of the humor in the narrative is arguably directed more toward the adult reading audience than to child readers. Situations such as the protagonists' first attempt at recycling become funny against the background of already knowing what recycling is, which enables readers to understand the absurdity of the situation. This knowledge can be assumed to be held by adult readers, but not necessarily by child readers. The intertextual reference to Obstfelder's poem "Jeg ser" can also clearly be interpreted as an allusion that is meant to be decoded by adults who have probably been confronted with this canonical text at school.

Given that the picturebook is marketed at a target audience aged three to six, this poses some questions. Although the picturebook series is very popular in Norway, *The Storm* was not funded by the State Purchasing Program for Contemporary Norwegian Fiction and Non-Fiction (Fjeldberg, 2020). As Fjeldberg writes, rejections are not explained, which leaves room for interpretation. It can, however, be inferred that works which are not financed through this purchasing scheme do not sufficiently comply with the cultural fund's requirements. Among critics, the picturebook also received a mixed reception. Mette Moe (2019), for example, states that there is so much going on in the narrative that she needed more than one reading to understand the story, something which might also be true for younger readers. Although the public reception of the narratives is not a main focus of my project, it is relevant with regard to their didactic potential and the question of how the narrative might facilitate – or impede – children's understanding of the picturebook's content. On the one hand, there are many narrative strategies that help children immerse themselves into *The Storm*, such as the recognizability of where Yesper and Noper live, but also their characteristic ways of speaking. References to other picturebooks from the series also function as immersive hooks. On the other hand, it can be asked whether the picturebook's many allusions directed at adult readers, many of which concern humorous and complex aspects of the narrative, might be too difficult for children to understand on their own. The competence given to child readers by the visual narrative can therefore potentially be lessened by the sophistication of some – mostly verbal – aspects of the narrative.

11.4 Conclusion

The topic of environmental problems is taken up on different levels in *The Storm*. Both the verbal and the visual level show complexities and address both child and adult readers. The picturebook does not contain much verbal text on each page and leaves some space for explanations, discoveries, and possibly discussions between child and adult readers. The imagery is characterized by the same simple style that is dominant in the other books from Stai's series. The narrative makes connections to the overall series through its use of similar verbal and visual strategies as in other picturebooks about Yesper and Noper. Among these strategies are the characteristic manner of speaking the protagonists use, and the appearance of places and characters known from earlier volumes of the series.

I have discussed how the interplay between verbal text and pictures varies throughout the narrative. Before the storm appears as an active character, the visual narrative comments on and evaluates the main plot that concerns the protagonists. The weather is an especially interesting phenomenon in the picturebook because it appears as active on a visual level much earlier than it speaks as the storm. Nature generally takes the role of the moral compass in *The Storm*. The fact that much of what nature says throughout the narrative happens on a visual level also enables less advanced readers to discover much of the story. Together with the verbal narrative, the picturebook displays fundamental discrepancies between what the protagonists do and notice and what nature thinks of Yesper's and Noper's behavior.

The main conflict in the narrative is the protagonists' consumption behavior and its consequences for the environment. Screwloose functions as the character who introduces consumerism into the lives of Yesper and Noper, and through her influence, the protagonists' lifestyle becomes more and more unsustainable, and they end up in a serious conflict with nature. Only by being directly confronted with the global consequences of their behavior do Yesper and Noper evolve into ecological citizens in accordance with Dobson's model, even displaying aspects of 'critical sustainability citizenship'. The most important civic practices foregrounded in the work are the reduction of the ecological footprint, nature conservation, and changing production behaviors. Yesper's and Noper's civic evolution is reflected in the changing conditions of the weather. Although the picturebook conveys a clear message – living as ecological citizens is more preferable than consumption-oriented living and neglect of nature – the moral

voice does not appear as excessively strong because it is not a human voice that gives the moral lesson.

12 Comparison

The analyses show that the narratives I examined have different ways of portraying storyworlds, environmental problems, and aspects of environmental citizenship. This makes a comparative discussion of the seven picturebooks and comics discussed in my project an important step toward understanding how environmental citizenship is narrated in picturebooks and comics. In this chapter, I will highlight and discuss some of the main similarities and differences between the seven works I have examined.

12.1 Storyworlds

In all seven narratives I analyzed, the environment forms an important part of the storyworld because all seven texts take up environmental issues as a central part of the stories they tell. Nevertheless, the picturebooks and comics use different visual and verbal strategies to create storyworlds and cue readers to immerse themselves into them.

Even though the seven works I analyzed tell different stories, some common overriding strategies in constructing the storyworlds can be observed across the works. All texts work with gaps (Iser, 1978) to some degree, and the gaps concern different aspects of the storyworlds. For example, in *Blekkulf*, the most central gap is a character, the girl Tove who appears toward the end of the story and who readers are invited to identify with. Meanwhile, in some of the comic strips in *Nemi*, the highly 'gappy' presentation of Earth and its history in some comic strips invites readers to supplement what they see on the page with knowledge they have about the actual world. And in *The Blue People*, the town where the crew discovers the caramel factory lacks almost any description both on the visual and the verbal level. Since it also does not have a name, readers might here fill gaps with their own experiences from the actual world. The works thus show a different degree of what Herman (2002) refers to as "gappiness", meaning both the fact that a storyworld is never complete, and the "more or less complete reconstruction of aspects of storyworlds" (p. 67). An example of a text that has a low degree of 'gappiness' would be *The Urban Legend*, which presents readers with a story set in a defined location, and that spells out much of the story's subtext, and where little is left unsaid or unspecified.

The significance of gaps in the stories is connected to another factor observable in all seven works I discussed, namely Marie-Laure Ryan's 'principle

of minimal departure' (Ryan, 1991). This principle is closely connected to the notion of gaps because it provides an approach to explaining how readers might potentially fill the gaps they encounter in a given narrative text. Much like gaps, this principle is connected to all entities that are part of the storyworld, including setting, characters, and aspects of the plot. Most of the stories I analyzed take place in undefined locations, allowing readers to construct the storyworlds they immerse themselves into in ways that resemble the actual world as closely as they want to. This applies, for example, to the nameless town in *The Blue People*. Another example is the *Nemi* comic strip shown in fig. 7.5, whose nine panels give a general impression of life on Earth through aspect-to-aspect transitions. This is juxtaposed with the fable of the frog and the scorpion. Readers are invited to construct a holistic mental model of the planet as the comic strip's storyworld, which they connect with the verbal text. In the course of the short narrative, readers might think about situations they know from the actual world that fit into the story about how the scorpion (humans) ends up killing the frog (the planet).

Another principle that could be observed in several of the works I discussed was the notion of deictic shifts (Stockwell, 2002). While a deictic shift is always part of a narrative – since it makes readers position themselves in a storyworld in relation to its other entities and its setting by using, for example, certain pronouns that indicate the location of objects or people – some narratives invite readers to perform a deictic shift in a more direct way. This is most notable in *The Blue People*, in which the narrative addresses readers directly at the beginning and invites them to imagine lying on the grass in the summer, observing a small cloud. By bringing the Blue People into this situation and connecting them to readers' imagination of lying in the grass, the text invites readers to perform a deictic shift into the narrative's storyworld and create a connection between the actual world and the Blue People. Both *The Storm* and *Nina Learns Recycling* use visual markers to invite readers to perform a deictic shift. In both picturebooks, the stories start at the protagonists' home. And in both cases, the first two double-spreads show their homes once from further away, and once from a closer perspective. This enables readers to locate where the characters are as the plot begins.

Nemi is the work that most evidently uses scripts as a storytelling strategy, especially by subverting them and thus not complying with readers' expectations. This strategy has an ironizing effect and contributes centrally to the satirical quality in several of the comic strips. *Donald Duck* uses scripts in a different way. Building on readers' knowledge of the characters and their features, the stories employ

Donald's nephews – who are the characters readers are often invited to identify with – as the moral voice that tries to make Donald aware of an obstacle or problem he will encounter early on. Readers who are familiar with the dynamics of the *Donald Duck* comics will most likely know that Donald will not listen to his nephews and that they will turn out to be right in the end. So here, the comics activate a script that does not refer so much to readers' knowledge of the actual world, but rather to their knowledge of the larger storyworld of *Donald Duck*. The works for the youngest readers do not show the same kind of varied treatment of scripts, and a reason for this might be what Herman (2002) notes about the function of scripts when it comes to children's literature: "to help them [children – B. H.] acquire more strategies for getting to know it [the world – B. H.]. […] Far from presuming the script expertise supporting more elaborate narrative experiments, children's fictions consolidate and reinforce scripts on which narrative competence itself depends" (p. 111).

Apart from overriding principles that can help to explain how readers cognitively immerse themselves into storyworlds, the seven works I analyzed use different visual and verbal narrative strategies to construct their individual storyworlds. With regard to these strategies, there is some overlap, as well as some differences, in how the texts cue readers to immerse themselves into the storyworld.

The texts for the youngest readers are visibly characterized by playful elements and a lighter mood, even though *The Storm* contains a quite dramatic development. Stai's picturebook is strongly characterized by elements of nonsense humor, which is a characteristic of the picturebook series *Yesper and Noper* as a whole. Taking set expressions at their literal meaning and playing with the contrasting characters of the protagonists gives the storyworld as a whole a playful setting. Meanwhile, the storyworld in *Nina Learns Recycling* features other aspects of play on both the verbal and the visual level of the narrative. Examples for this are the repeated direct addresses to readers and especially the posing of questions to them, as well as some of the details in the pictures, such as the cat Molly who also functions as a funny sidekick. While *Nina Learns Recycling* takes place in a realistic setting with a realistic drawing style, the narrative about Yesper and Noper is characterized by surrealist elements and strong simplifications that bring a high level of artistry to the picturebook. Both aspects are taken up on the verbal level with the oppositional positions of Yesper and Noper marked by their ways of starting sentences, as well as on the visual level – for example, through the smiling

face of Yesper that contrasts with Noper's sad appearance. However, *The Storm* is not the only text in the selection with such a distinct artistic and surreal style. While most of the other picturebooks and the comics are characterized by a more realistic drawing style, *The Blue People* uses more fantastic elements, especially on a visual level, as well. The main characters of the story are visibly influenced by psychedelic elements and hippie culture, and the verbal style of the text is also more poetic when the Blue People are the focus. These features contrast with the second half of the story, in which the Blue People enter the town and find out that everyone is sleeping. The verbal style in this part of the story is more prosaic, and the townspeople are shown as a more business-like and uniform group of people. The different depictions of the Blue People and the townspeople mirror their different perspectives on the world. The crew under the command of Poor Augusta bring an unconventional perspective to the world, something that is visibly absent from the town.

The notion of play also hints at the more general notion of genre when it comes to the works I analyzed, since several of the narratives' storyworlds are influenced by aspects of genre. This factor is quite striking, for example, in *Blekkulf*, which shows some fundamental characteristics of the fable genre, although it also breaks with a central aspect of the fable at a crucial point in the plot by introducing a human character into the storyworld. Another text that refers to the fable very explicitly is the *Nemi* comic strip shown in fig. 7.5 that has as its verbal text the fable of the frog and the scorpion. While the *Nemi* story does not break with the fable convention, it gives the text a twist in the way it works with the panels. Thus, the fable contains a very distinct environmental statement without formulating it explicitly. Other genre conventions that were part of the storyworlds I discussed were, for example, the adventure and superhero genres. These genres shape the storyworld of *The Urban Legend* in central ways, something that is not only true for the special issue I examined in my project, but also for the comics series as a whole. Meanwhile, the series about *Nemi* can be located in the comedy genre, since most of the stories work with punch lines and satirical subversions of social topics. It is clear that environmental topics are narrated in a variety of genres and that genre conventions also shape how these topics are presented in multimodal storyworlds.

Pollution is part of almost every storyworld discussed in my project, with the exception of *Nina Learns Recycling*. Even though the main topic of the picturebook is environmental, the idea of recycling and upcycling for

environmental reasons is taken up on a more theoretical level, rather than because of an actual environmental problem the characters experience. This also makes Durante's picturebook the only text that does not contain a conflict, since the conflicts readers meet in the works examined here are largely environmental ones. In the other works, the storyworld is inhabited by characters who experience environmental problems either as victims of environmental pollution (such as in *Blekkulf*), as characters fighting against pollution (such as in *The Blue People* or *The Urban Legend*), or as characters who behave in an environmentally harmful way and eventually change their perspective (such as in *The Storm*).

Concerning the topic of a central conflict, it is interesting to compare *The Storm* and *Nina Learns Recycling* because although both works have an overlap regarding their potential readership, they have contrasting ways of cueing readers to construct storyworlds. Kari Stai's picturebook series builds on nonsense humor both on the verbal and the visual level. Additionally, it refers back to earlier picturebooks in the series and thus invites readers to build a local narrative that is connected to a larger storyworld they might already know from previous reading experiences. In contrast to this, *Nina Learns Recycling* is the first work in a series, so it cannot rely on readers knowing aspects of the storyworld or the main characters. Both narratives have decidedly environmental topics but frame them in different ways. Durante's picturebook concentrates on creativity as a way to reduce waste and live a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. Interestingly, the motivation to minimize one's use of resources exists without a confrontation with an environmental problem. In *The Storm*, it is exactly this kind of confrontation and the intervention of nature itself that makes the protagonists understand that they must change their behavior and reduce their ecological footprint. Meanwhile, in *Blekkulf*, the focus lies on a vulnerable community in the context of marine pollution, so readers here see what wasteful behavior does to those who suffer from it. Here, the storyworld is visually characterized by a more cartoonish drawing style that focuses on the anthropomorphized main characters and the area in which they live.

Several of the works use anthropomorphization as a visual strategy to facilitate readers' immersion into nonhuman characters and to narrate nonhuman perspectives. In the examples I discussed, this strategy is mostly used in works for younger readers, and for *Donald Duck*, it is important to note that the anthropomorphized animals do not serve an environmental purpose but rather a humorous one. However, in *Blekkulf*, the anthropomorphization of the main

characters helps readers connect to a vulnerable community on an emotional level. At the same time, the strategy is also used for comic effect, which is especially evident when it comes to the character Rokkerolf. In *The Storm,* Yesper and Noper are confronted with an anthropomorphized cloud at the dramatic climax of the story. The storm's anthropomorphization makes it possible for the protagonists, as well as for readers, to understand nature's growing anger about the environmental impacts of Yesper and Noper's behavior. In a more abstract way, even the Blue People can be read as an anthropomorphic force of nature. They act as guardians of the sky and are concerned about the environment, but since they are cautious not to be discovered by humans, they can be interpreted as an external force that observes and supervises the planet.

The setting for the four picturebooks is very local and the stories unfold in smaller areas. At the same time, these local settings are so little defined that they can be read allegorically, and readers might imagine that the stories they read are taking place near them, which can also create an emotional closeness during the reading experiences. The only two stories that take place in defined locales are *The Urban Legend* and *Donald Duck*. But while the latter is located in a fictional city that is highly changeable – and thus adaptable to readers' individual imagination – the former takes place mainly in the Amazon rainforest, more specifically in the region of Manaus. Here, the focus lies more on the aspect of depicting other environments than the one readers might know from their everyday lives. By discovering the Amazon rainforest together with the protagonist, readers are invited to imagine how other people live and what kinds of challenges they face. This goes more directly in the direction of what Erin James (2015) writes about "the potential for narratives to open up channels of communication about different ways of imagining and experiencing various environments" (p. 212).

The verbal and visual depiction of pollution varies in the texts, and interestingly, *The Storm* and *The Blue People* have similar visual strategies to present the same kind of pollution: smoke coming from a factory. In *The Storm*, the smoke from the factory is depicted in a style that differs quite strongly from the rest of the picturebook, which marks it clearly as something that is not a natural part of the storyworld's environment. In *The Blue People*, a similar strategy is used to mark the smoke from the caramel factory as an unnatural entity. In this case, the smoke is made out of fingerprints, which marks the smoke as specifically human-made, and for contemporary readers, this might even remind them of the concept of the ecological footprint. *Blekkulf* and *The Mermaid Man* also feature the same

pollutant, namely a waste pipe in the ocean. In these narratives, the seriousness of the pollution is expressed through the size of the waste pipe. In the *Donald Duck* story, the pipe's diameter is about twice the protagonist's height (fig. 8.4). In *Blekkulf*, the pipe takes up almost the complete breadth of the picturebook (fig. 6.2), so the book's landscape format emphasizes its size in contrast to the characters.

The Blue People and *The Storm* are examples of works in which nature is presented as an active participant in the stories, and interestingly, in both cases, the active nature is mostly located in the sky. This is most evident in Stai's picturebook, where the storm actively intervenes and directly interacts with the protagonists as one of the most central aspects of the story, and it underlines the central position the environment has in the picturebook. Nature also appears as an active agent in *Fighting Nature with Nature*, where animals appear as active participants that have an important influence on the storyworld. Here, this happens in the form of the animals Donald imports to the city to handle the plague situation that constantly gets out of hand, because the animals that Donald buys do not comply with how he imagined the situation would develop.

It is possible to observe somewhat different environmental foci from a historical perspective. Air pollution had become a central topic of discussion in the 1970s, and it is the central environmental pollution presented in *The Blue People*. Likewise, the theme of overconsumption has become more prominent since the turn of the millennium, and it features more openly in, for example, *Nemi*, *Nina Learns Recycling*, and *The Storm*. Of course, since my text selection does not provide an exhaustive overview of Norwegian picturebooks and comics from the 1970s until the end of the 2010s, I do not necessarily suggest that these topics are general characteristics of multimodal children's literature in different decades. However, it can be understood as an indicator of how picturebooks and comics narrate environmental topics and how they use verbal and visual strategies to depict issues that are central to current social debates. The works I analyzed use a variety of stylistic devices to cue readers' construction of storyworlds, almost all of which depict aspects of pollution and an environmental problem that needs solving.

The storyworlds I analyzed in my project present the environment in various ways on both the verbal and the visual level. All seven narratives use some of the same main strategies in how they cue readers to mentally construct the storyworlds they immerse themselves into, which emphasizes that these are overriding

strategies that apply to narratives that use different modalities. The environment forms part of the storyworlds in different ways, and environmental issues are taken up on both the verbal and the visual level. Both playful and more serious presentations of environmental issues could be observed in the text selection, and it is clear that the environment forms a central part in the storyworlds I examined in different ways.

12.2 Environmental citizenship

Aspects of environmental citizenship are taken up in different ways in the seven works I analyzed, both with regard to how they are discussed in the texts, as well as what aspects of environmental citizenship feature in the stories.

Generally speaking, the majority of the narratives concentrate more on individual civic behavior and practices than on collective ones. Aspects from the whole range of approaches to environmental citizenship that I discussed in chapter 2 could be observed in comparable amounts, with a slight overrepresentation of aspects of environmental citizenship that can be assigned to the liberal range of environmental citizenship. Some narratives, such as *Nina Learns Recycling*, focus mainly on one aspect of environmental citizenship, in this case recycling. However, several texts also present more than one dimension of the subject. For example, *The Urban Legend* addresses the topic both on an individual as well as a collective level, especially in the paratexts surrounding the story. Readers are called upon to take up individual practices such as recycling or saving energy in their everyday lives, but they are also encouraged to take up environmental problems in the public space and talk to local politicians about these issues. On the level of the story itself, *The Urban Legend* takes up the question of fossil fuels most explicitly in the scene when Malcolm is sitting in his electric car and thinking about the issue. With its specific setting in the Amazon rainforest, the text also discusses the issue of a violation of rights and liberties that concerns indigenous people who suffer under the practices and consequences of illegal deforestation. Unlike the other six works, this narrative also puts a focus on indigenous communities of the Global South.

Most narratives formulate environmental duties more clearly than they take up environmental rights, but these duties are seldom framed as obligatory collective duties in a more classical republican sense and instead more often understood as necessary, yet voluntary, individual practices in a more liberal sense.

In most texts, characters are confronted with environmental problems and need to change their individual behavior to be more environmentally friendly. This is, for example, the central theme of *The Storm*, where Yesper and Noper are being held responsible for the pollution of the planet and their environmental insight leads to a positive change for themselves and their environment. In a similar vein, *Nina Learns Recycling* also focuses on the duty to think about the environment, which is something that Nina's parents emphasize early in the story. The difference between Stai's and Durante's approaches to the topic is that while Yesper and Noper have to consider environmental questions because of a specific confrontation with a natural force, the environment features as more of an abstract concept in the story about Nina. However, both texts concentrate on the duty of protecting the environment by changing one's behavior, and both texts recall some aspects of 'ecological citizenship' as formulated by Andrew Dobson (2003). *Blekkulf* is, meanwhile, an example of a picturebook that takes up both rights and duties in different ways. Blekkulf sees it as his duty to inform humans onshore about the impact of their behavior on the underwater environment. The plea in his letter can also be interpreted as the indirect formulation of a duty for humans to help the protagonist and his friends and take action against maritime pollution. Although it is not taken up explicitly in the picturebook, this duty that humans are charged with simultaneously implies Blekkulf's right to a clean environment.

A more explicit discussion of rights and duties features in *The Blue People*, where the mayor and the owner of the caramel factory discuss the issue of air pollution. On the one side, the mayor and the townspeople demand clean air. On the other side, the factory owner objects that, firstly, the factory is necessary because people want to have caramels, and secondly, closing the factory would mean that the workers there would lose their jobs. In this discussion, the people's right to clean air stands more strongly in the focus. At the same time, the factory owner's objections show that the town council also has the duty to think about the consequences of their request to close the factory, although this is not mentioned explicitly in the text. This central debate of the picturebook is clearly framed as political, since the two characters talking to each other do so in their public functions as mayor and factory owner. Meanwhile, in *The Mermaid Man*, Donald's central problem concerns a conflict of duties which creates a funny situation. On the one hand, he is charged with checking his uncle's waste pipe, but on the other hand, he has a duty to help the mermaid community because he agreed to do so. Like in *Blekkulf*, Donald's duty to the mermaid community implies the

community's right to a clean environment, which is not taken up explicitly in the story.

Nemi takes up rights and duties, as well as other aspects of environmental citizenship, mostly on the level of subtext. For example, in fig. 7.3, in which Nemi talks to the boy who is grounded for having broken a vase, she contrasts his parents' decision to ground him with the argument that the boy's parents have contributed to a much larger destruction, namely that of the planet. This comparison discusses being punished for a fault, but it implicitly takes up the boy's right to a future on the planet and foregrounds the question of intergenerational justice. Furthermore, *Nemi* displays another aspect of 'the natural contract' named above. In fig. 7.5, about the fable of the frog and the scorpion, human behavior and its consequences for the planet can be understood as what Michel Serres calls "parasitic", meaning that the parasite (humans) is destroying its host without necessarily realizing it (Serres, 2011, pp. 36–37).

As noted in the previous section, most storyworlds readers encounter in the selection of texts I analyzed are local. Therefore, the texts also mainly present local communities when it comes to aspects of environmental citizenship. However, I argue that many of these local communities can be read allegorically as examples of larger communities. For example, *The Storm* presents a community of three characters before the storm intervenes. But the behavioral problem the protagonists face later in the story is something that is not only true of the protagonists, but can be transferred to large parts of the world population, especially the population of the Global North. This is also taken up visually when the protagonists look at the planet from above. Likewise, the onshore/underwater dynamic addressed in *Blekkulf* can be understood on a broader scale as the asymmetrical relationship between the Global North and the Global South. The only community that does not allow for this relatively direct transfer to a more abstract level is the one presented in *The Urban Legend*, although here as well, the indigenous tribe the protagonist meets can be understood as a representation of indigenous tribes in the Amazon rainforest more generally.

Several of the works I discussed also take up the question of who belongs to the community. While some works focus more clearly on human communities – as, for example, *The Urban Legend* – other works include animals in their understanding of community, most notably texts that also feature animals as characters, such as *Blekkulf*. And then, a picturebook like *The Storm* seems to include the storm himself and the environment into the local community at the end,

since it reacts quite actively to the protagonists' behavior and thus communicates with them nonverbally. *Blekkulf* can furthermore be regarded with respect to Bruno Latour's argument to include nonhumans into the community and enable communication between humans and nonhumans (Latour, 2004, pp. 65–70). It should be remembered, though, that in *Blekkulf*, a spokesperson is not actually needed because Blekkulf and his friends speak in human language, which facilitates communication between the cephalopod and humans toward the end of the story. In connection with the inclusion of animals into the community, the narrative also brings up the question of the rights of other species. One of the comic strips in *Nemi* also takes up this topic. In fig. 7.4, in which Nemi writes a letter to the Norwegian population registry, she argues against treating animals in cruel ways. Although it is not formulated explicitly in the comic strip, her irritation over the treatment of animals on the grounds that they lack certain human qualities does recall some of Latour's arguments – for example, his point that animals do possess language, it just happens to be nonhuman language.

The texts I analyzed throughout my project take up different aspects of environmental citizenship, although as I mentioned, there is a general tendency to focus more on individual than on collective behavior, and the majority of aspects of environmental citizenship can be understood as liberal approaches to the concept. One reason for this might be, as Hennig (2021b) notes with regard to Derek Bell's concept of liberal environmental citizenship, that these concepts mostly correspond to actual practices in Western democracies (p. 44). This is also connected to the fact that the dominant concepts of citizenship in general are liberal ones, so texts that take up aspects of liberal understandings of environmental citizenship build their storyworlds nearer to their readers' actual world. Furthermore, it can be argued that the individual practices discussed in my text selection that people need to adopt if they are to live in a more environmentally friendly way can be seen as more concrete or practical, and therefore arguably easier to understand and implement than actions on social issues that would target structural changes.[127]

However, several narratives do take up structural and collective aspects and also discuss ideas that can be ascribed to a republican understanding of

[127] Massey and Bradford (2011) identify "powerful tensions […] between the complexities of environmental science and the limitations of life experience and conceptual development in young children" (p. 125).

environmental citizenship. For example, in *The Storm*, Yesper and Noper first learn that their individual consumer behavior is harmful to the environment. In their conversation with the storm, they realize that this behavior is in fact a collective problem, so they not only take action against overconsumption on an individual level, but also bring about a change in Screwloose and stop her unmoderated production of stuff. In *The Mermaid Man*, it can be argued that the destruction of unsustainable structures for the common good is even framed as specifically positive because it is celebrated as a victory by both the mermaid community and the environmental protection inspector. In my text selection, *The Blue People* is the narrative that focuses most strongly on some fundamentally republican aspects of citizenship. The Blue People are a group that works for a common good – in this case clean air – and even the discussion between the mayor and the factory owner mostly concerns collective problems. The fact that the characters readers meet appear as public people also underlines that the focus of the story is a public and collective issue and that the characters need to find a common solution for the collective good at the end of the story.

Another central aspect in several of the narratives is the notion of consumer citizenship (Cao, 2015, p. 63), prevalent, for example, in *The Storm* as well as in other narratives, such as *Nina Learns Recycling* and *Donald Duck*. In *Nina Learns Recycling*, the protagonist's attitude is clearly opposed to buying new things that are unnecessary. On one double-spread, Nina's refusal to get a new toy is contrasted with a boy in the background who is looking into the toy store, apparently amazed by the toys he sees. On a more implicit level, consumer citizenship also features in *Nemi*, especially in the comic strip fig. 7.5 about the fable of the frog and the scorpion. With the contrast between the text of the fable and the panels of the comic strip, human behavior is depicted as contradictory and as harmful to the planet. The last panel in particular, which contains the fable's moral and shows a skeleton sitting in a room that is overflowing with stuff, implies the idea that humans' excessive consumption behavior has centrally contributed to a self-destructive situation for humans on Earth.

Interestingly, there seems to be no connection between the approaches to environmental citizenship presented in the narratives and the readership's supposed reading age. The narrative that is most openly marked as containing a political dimension, *The Blue People*, is meanwhile itself the oldest text, published in 1974, in a decade that saw a strong politicization of both children's literature and environmental topics. As neoliberalism has started to impact understandings

of citizenship, consumer behavior and the idea of 'voting with your wallet' has become more prominent as a focus of citizenship behavior (Cao, 2015, p. 67). Accordingly, some of the most recent works I analyzed, *Nina Learns Recycling* and *The Storm*, do feature this aspect most strongly. It can be observed that the narratives take up issues that are part of the current debate at the time of their publication, which is not surprising, but more a confirmation of the fact that literature discusses socially relevant topics. It became apparent that even though individual behaviors were more often discussed as aspects of environmental citizenship, both liberal and republican approaches, as well as more philosophical understandings of what it can mean to be an environmental citizen, are featured in the texts I analyzed. The variety of approaches that are addressed in the seven works can be understood to mirror the variety of concepts of environmental citizenship prevalent in research, and thus mirror the complexity of the subject in general. The narratives do take up these aspects in at times heavily simplified ways, such as in *The Storm*, where overconsumption has to be counteracted, but readers never learn what happens to all the stuff that is cleaned up at the end. Meanwhile, a text for older readers, such as *Nemi*, does depict some of the contradictory behavior humans show toward their environment, which can be understood to be first and foremost a criticism of the neglectful attitudes society shows toward the environment. This also shows that the picturebooks and comics I discussed use different strategies to present what they frame as important for the discussion of environmentally friendly behavior.

12.3 Educating environmental citizens

The seven narratives I analyzed in my project display different strategies when it comes to questions of readerly engagement in environmental topics. As mentioned in the beginning, the texts in my selection are all informed by moral values concerning the environment to some degree, and some of the stories have been specifically created for an educational purpose. These factors should also be considered when it comes to the question of how the narratives seek to engage readers for environmental topics.

All the narratives I examined in my project invite some kind of readerly identification, although the location of this identification differs from text to text. In some stories, as in *Nina Learns Recycling* and *The Urban Legend*, readers are invited to identify with the protagonists. In the first case, this is also the character

who undergoes a learning process concerning environmental behavior, while in *The Urban Legend*, the hero uncovers other characters' illegal activities. In *The Blue People*, readers are also invited to identify with the protagonists, although here, the protagonists are an external force that brings a new and important perspective by literally waking up the sleeping town. Meanwhile, in *Blekkulf*, readers spend a large part of the story accompanying the protagonist and his friends and learning about their environment and the environmental problem they discover. The character they are meant to identify with only appears later in the story, when Blekkulf's letter has reached a girl onshore who extends her hand into the water and promises to help the protagonist to make people aware of environmental pollution. In *Donald Duck*, readers are mostly invited to identify with Donald's nephews, who act as the moral voice in two of the comics I discussed. Huey, Dewey, and Louie anticipate that Donald's behavior will have harmful effects and try to prevent the situation getting out of control. Readers who are familiar with the larger storyworld of *Donald Duck* are most likely to also anticipate certain turns of the story, much like the three nephews. Interestingly, this places readers in the position of the more competent character when it comes to environmental issues, and it places them in the position of those who are most often right at the end. Meanwhile, reader identification functions in different ways in *Nemi*. Here, readers are sometimes invited to see themselves, or aspects of their behavior, more abstractly in some of the topics that are being criticized in the comic strips, for example in fig. 7.5 that has the fable of the frog and the scorpion as its topic. The potentially inconvenient moral of the fable, as well as its undertone, plays on readers' identification with the scorpion, even though it can also be assumed that they are aware of the fact that the scorpion's behavior is ultimately not only harmful, but deadly. Other comic strips more strongly invite identification with the protagonist, or encourage readers to adopt the position of an observer of an absurd situation.

Most texts that I discussed contain some form of learning process for the characters in the stories, and in some cases, the characters that are going through the learning process are characters readers are invited to identify with. In *The Storm* for example, Yesper and Noper are not aware of their own harmful behaviors and are therefore confronted with these, and their consequences, in the course of the story. In other narratives, such as *The Blue People* and *Blekkulf*, the most important point is to make others aware of an environmental problem they are causing. However, while Blekkulf wants to cooperate with humans, the Blue

People, as more of an external force, withdraw from the plot in the end and let the humans decide what they want to do about the problem of air pollution by themselves, because they are the ones most affected by it. In both narratives, making others – other characters as well as readers – aware of the problem is the most crucial thing, and in both cases, the narratives address readers in more or less direct ways when it comes to these key aspects. Both texts address readers right at the beginning of the story, *The Blue People* through its invitation to connect the storyworld to readers' actual world, and *Blekkulf*, for example, by greeting readers in the picturebooks' endpapers, before the plot begins. Both narratives stay consequent in their strategy to solidify readers' immersion into the storyworld and their emotional engagement through breaking the fourth wall both in the beginning and toward the end of the story. *The Blue People* additionally features a song at the end of the narrative, which is already referred to earlier in the story. The song builds a connection to readers by repeatedly using a narrative 'you' in the lyrics. Meanwhile, in *Blekkulf*, readers are also addressed directly in the letter the protagonist and his friends send to humans onshore, since it is addressed to people in general, rather than a specific person. Addressing readers at the end of the story also happens in *The Urban Legend*, where the hero encourages readers to "make a change" (Yohannes, 2019, p. 24, panel 1) as he is shown planting trees in the Amazon rainforest after readers have experienced his fight against illegal deforestation in the region. Likewise, in *Nina Learns Recycling*, when Nina has the idea of organizing a recycling festival in her garden, the narrative voice asks readers whether they also want to come to the festival in the end, thus inviting them to identify as friends of Nina's. This picturebook does in fact address readers directly multiple times throughout the story. The narrative voice asks questions connected to the plot, as well as more general questions that can be understood as ways to establish a more intimate relationship with readers. In these examples, addressing readers at the end of the story opens up a discussion of the most important topics presented.

Several of the narratives use playful elements in their storytelling, which is also important with regard to readerly engagement and the didactic potential that lies in the narratives. Most notably, *The Storm* and *Nina Learns Recycling* are characterized by an overall playful atmosphere, even though the atmosphere in the former picturebook eventually turns and becomes more dramatic. Both picturebooks can be understood to feature the reader as 'player', which is the typical reader role that Appleyard (1991, p. 14) assigns to the youngest readers. In

Nina Learns Recycling, readers are repeatedly invited to explore the possibilities of recycling and discover the changes that have been made to different objects in the house. While some of these visual discoveries go along with verbal markers – for example, when Nina's mother asks whether Nina likes the new lampshade, and both Nina and readers can see that it consists of an old hat – other factors are not mentioned in the text and readers are free to find various details on the double-spreads. Another visual aspect that contributes to the playful atmosphere in the picturebook is the decorative flowers that populate most of the pictures and underline the overall positive atmosphere in the story. An element of playfulness is also contained in *Blekkulf*, where readers are invited to examine a sea urchin together with Blekkulf early on in the story (fig. 6.1). The characters' reference to feeling like detectives also invites readers to accompany Blekkulf and his friends in this endeavor. At the same time, it encourages readers to pay attention to some of the details presented in the pictures. *The Storm* employs other strategies to create a playful tone for large parts of the story. Generally speaking, this story, as well as the picturebook series as a whole, is characterized by its use of nonsense humor in the interplay between verbal text and pictures. Here, it also becomes apparent how the narrative addresses a double audience consisting of child and adult readers. Much of the visual and verbal wordplay that features in the text is arguably more directly addressed at adults who, due to their experience of life, understand the twists the picturebook applies to some of the set expressions that are taken literally by the characters. The exaggerations used in the picturebook also create humor and invite readers to explore the pages, not least because the picturebook contains a visual narrative that differs from the main plot presented in the verbal text. This feature also gives more competence to child readers who might not yet be fully able to read, since they can discover important aspects of the story by themselves.

Exaggerations are not only used in Stai's picturebook but also feature in *Donald Duck* and *Nemi* as important aspects of how the texts communicate with readers. In both cases, exaggerations come into play to uncover what the narratives frame as negative behavior – for example, when Nemi uses an excessive process of argumentation to justify buying a can of hairspray in fig. 7.1, or when Donald imports ever new predatory animals to retain control over the mosquito plague in Duckburg in *Fighting Nature with Nature*. Especially in *Nemi*, the criticism that is implied, for example, in exaggerations is central to how the comic strips work. Rather than ideas for a positive change in behavior, the comic strips use satire – which has exaggeration as one of its central stylistic devices – to criticize the status

quo. On the one hand, the variety of environmental issues and attitudes discussed in *Nemi* presents different perspectives on a number of questions related to aspects of environmental citizenship. On the other hand, this variety, and the fact that many of the comic strips subvert reader expectations and have a strong satirical note, result in an ambiguous overall picture for readers. What is more, since some of the comic strips potentially suggest that the underlying problem for the planet is rooted in human nature, this can entail some difficulties for readerly engagement or discussions that might be sparked by the comic strips.

As mentioned, some of the texts I analyzed were specifically made for educational purposes. This is true to some extent for *Nemi* and for *The Urban Legend*, two special issues about the environment. But while the special issue of *Nemi* consists of previously existing comic strips that have been gathered in a special issue, the story for *The Urban Legend* has been specifically created for the special issue and for use in classrooms. Out of the seven works I discussed, *The Urban Legend* is arguably the narrative with the most openly educational tone, or the work that seems to be most clearly characterized by a specifically intended use. The educational tone in the comic book extends to both the narrative itself and to its paratexts, which I will take up again shortly. In the story, the focus lies on Malcolm and his journey to the Amazon rainforest to rescue his friend Matin. Both before and after he arrives in Brazil, there are several cases of what I identified as 'info-dumping'. The first of these cases, where Malcolm is sitting in his electric car and thinking about the problem of fossil fuels, also sheds light on a potentially problematic aspect of the narrative, because it presents a one-sided discussion of an important environmental topic due to a car maker's association with the special issue as an official partner.

Another common factor across several works is the notion that a central reason for the environmental problems presented in the narratives is ignorance on the part of humans. In several of the texts, people do not realize that their behavior is harmful to the environment and making them aware of that fact is one of the central events in the plot. A key element of both *Blekkulf* and *The Blue People* is a call to action addressed to humans who are not aware of the environmental problems depicted in the story. But while *Blekkulf* contains a more explicitly formulated call to action directed at humans, *The Blue People* mostly remains on the level of reflection, as readers do not find out what the townspeople decide in the end. Other texts, such as *Nina Learns Recycling* or *The Urban Legend*, also feature more direct calls to action addressed at readers.

In this part of the analysis, it is also important to consider paratexts, how they contextualize some of the narratives, and how they might contribute to calls to action directed at readers. The two special issues of *Nemi* and *The Urban Legend* that I discussed each use some of their paratexts as additional informational material for readers, not least because both comic books were created to be used in classrooms. It therefore does not seem surprising that both comic books also include more concrete suggestions for what readers can do to live a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. In the case of *The Urban Legend*, this is also the part of the comic book that addresses aspects of environmental citizenship most directly and displays aspects of both the liberal as well as the republican types of environmental citizenship. Meanwhile, in *Nemi*, it seems that a larger variety of perspectives on aspects of environmental citizenship is depicted in the comic strips than in the informational paratexts that mostly discuss individual behaviors and liberal perspectives on the topic.

For *Blekkulf*, another important aspect of the text that relates to readerly engagement is intermediality. The titular character does not only feature in the picturebook series, but he is also connected to an environmental organization for children. Additionally, Blekkulf featured on Norwegian television with a series about him and his friends, so his storyworld spans different areas of readers' everyday lives. In all the media where he appears, Blekkulf is mostly an openly didactic character, teaching children about various aspects of environmental protection. As a result, the character has a close connection to the actual world and establishes quite direct communication with readers on several levels. A different kind of intermedial reference can also be found in *Donald Duck* in the story *The Mermaid Man*. Here, one of the mermaids refers to Edvard Eriksen's sculpture *The Little Mermaid* when explaining to Donald why the mermaid community wants to remain undiscovered. This reference can be understood as a humorous note most explicitly directed at Scandinavian readers of the comic, who can be assumed to be familiar with the statue. On a similar note, *The Storm* contains a quite central intertextual reference directed at adult readers at its dramatic climax. Referring to Sigbjørn Obstfelder's poem "Jeg ser", the picturebook takes up the topic of how Yesper and Noper feel estranged from the polluted world in a larger cultural and historical context.

The different strategies I examined in the seven picturebooks and comics under the topic of 'educating environmental citizens' engage readers in different ways in environmental themes and aspects of environmental citizenship. Some

main differences in the texts' approaches lie, for example, in the more playful attitude of works such as *Nina Learns Recycling* as opposed to the more ambiguous and critical perspective readers encounter in *Nemi*. These differences are partly connected to the fact that the narratives have different target audiences with which they engage in different ways. However, all the texts use some form of readerly engagement, often by addressing readers directly, to include potentially educational aspects in the narratives. These aspects differ in their content and range from recycling to reducing one's ecological footprint or making others aware of environmental problems. Thus, the texts frame different aspects of environmental citizenship as central for the stories they tell. It became clear that the interplay between visual and verbal narrative strategies, as well as aspects of environmental citizenship, is taken up in different ways and that various aspects are being discussed as central in the works. The picturebooks and comics I analyzed in my project feature a variety of approaches to aspects of environmental citizenship when it comes to narrative presentation, matters of content, as well as communication with and engagement of readers.

13 Conclusion and future research prospects

In my project, I set out to find out how aspects of environmental citizenship are narrated in multimodal texts for young readers. I investigated how the narratives that formed my corpus invite readers to mentally construct storyworlds and immerse themselves into them by means of verbal text and pictures, and how the relationship between humans and the world they inhabit is taken up with regard to aspects of environmental citizenship. For this purpose, I analyzed seven Norwegian multimodal texts – four picturebooks and three comics – for readers between three and eighteen, written between 1974 and 2019.

The analyses in my project showed that the variety of aspects of environmental citizenship that are taken up in multimodal narratives is big, and that the works use different narrative strategies to create storyworlds readers are invited to engage with. In the examples of the two media I examined, I showed that the overriding strategies readers are invited to use to mentally construct storyworlds were similar in all seven works. At the same time, all the texts also employed stylistic devices more specific to their medium – for example, the gutter as a centrally important feature in comics, or visual and verbal page-turners in the picturebooks I examined. My analyses showed that the narratives take up environmental issues on both a local and a global scale, and readers are often invited to draw connections between storyworlds and the actual world they inhabit. The prevalence of different genres and atmospheres in the seven texts highlights the diversity of narratives for young readers that take up environmental issues.

The text selection showed that what the narratives frame as centrally important when it comes to the relationship between humans and their environment differs quite strongly, and they present different aspects of environmental citizenship as positive or desirable. Here, it may be pointed out again that I do not assume a conscious use of theories about environmental citizenship in any of the narratives, but rather that these theories can contribute to a more refined understanding of how environmental issues are discussed in narratives. What became clear through my analyses is that the narratives present a wide variety of aspects of environmental citizenship from different understandings of the concept. Both liberal and republican approaches to citizenship, as well as more philosophical perspectives on the topic, are taken up in the text corpus. This can be understood as an indication of the different aspects in the field of environmental citizenship that are not only present in theories of the concept, but

that also are apparent in aesthetic and cultural discussions about what living more environmentally friendly can mean. The variety of approaches to environmental citizenship also underlines the merits of a more detailed examination of the topic in narratives because it provides for a more differentiated analysis of the aspects that are depicted in narrative texts. It became clear that a more nuanced discussion of environmental citizenship in multimodal narratives is not only fruitful but necessary, because assuming an underlying understanding of environmental citizenship without going into more detail regarding what is meant by this term overlooks the complexity of both the concept and the narratives.

The combination of an econarratological analysis of multimodal storyworlds for young readers with a focus on aspects of environmental citizenship also led me to consider how the narratives engage readers in environmental topics more in detail. Under the topic 'educating environmental citizens', I examined the didactic potential and moral dimensions these narratives contain. Considering that environmental issues are often influenced in some way by ideological, political, and moral values, it seemed fitting to not disregard this dimension of the works. The texts have different approaches to matters such as reader identification and the use of gaps, both of which influence how readers immerse themselves into a given storyworld. The texts' openness toward readers differs, and some narratives have more explicit moral guidance for readers than others. The various ways in which the narratives invite readers to engage in a communicative reading activity shows a complexity in popular literature that should not be overlooked.

The three-part structure of my analyses made it possible to analyze both the formal aesthetic side and the thematic dimension of the narratives in detail, and it became clear that in order to understand how narratives take up the relationship between humans and the world they inhabit, both dimensions are equally important to discuss. On the one hand, the way in which storyworlds are presented shapes how thematic aspects are taken up, while on the other hand, thematic aspects also have an influence on how storyworlds are shaped. Finally, both dimensions come together in how readers are invited to immerse themselves into a storyworld and what topics they are invited to engage with.

With regard to educational questions, the complexity of the narratives I analyzed calls for a serious engagement with complex issues pupils in schools are confronted with. Literature – and also popular literature in particular – is again shown to be an important arena of discussion regarding important social questions, including when it comes to complex problems such as environmental pollution and

climate change. The differences in how the narratives I analyzed approach readers – that is, how they invite readers to immerse themselves into storyworlds while also conveying certain knowledge about the environment and containing an aspect of education at the same time – highlights the role that education plays in this context. The issues that are taken up in multimodal texts for young readers are complex and concern aesthetic questions, as well as questions concerning scientific knowledge. Here, it is important to point back to arguments made, for example, by Säfström and Östman (2020) or Greg Garrard (2021) that highlight the importance of acknowledging the complexity and tensions connected to these issues in education.

In my project, I showed that multimodal narratives provide a fruitful area of investigation for econarratological research that can contribute to widening the field. My selection of Norwegian popular literature also highlighted the importance of looking at narratives from different cultural regions to investigate which texts have social significance in which regions during which times. My combination of an econarratological approach to multimodal narratives with a focus on concepts of environmental citizenship also brings more interdisciplinary perspectives into the environmental humanities.

Since my text selection could only discuss aspects of environmental citizenship in a very specific area of Norwegian popular literature, further research would be needed to expand the field of research and discuss how other literary works depict this topic in Norwegian literature, as well as other national literatures. It would be fruitful to look at written narratives in both children's and adult literature to further explore how aspects of environmental citizenship form parts of other storyworlds. In connection with this, a deeper dive into popular literature as an object of investigation could produce interesting finds that can contribute to taking this area of literature more seriously in an academic context. This could ultimately help to widen our understandings of storyworlds and of approaches to environmental citizenship as a part of literary narratives. Furthermore, it would also be interesting to examine transmedial storyworlds in more detail, to analyze how characters transcend a single medium and the implications this might have for how readers construct storyworlds.

Regarding the area of multimodal texts, it would be especially exciting to explore the theme of environmental citizenship in Asian works such as Japanese manga and Korean manhwa. It would be interesting to examine how these works take up environmental issues, on the one hand because environmental storytelling

also has a tradition in East Asian cultures, and on the other hand because manga has become an extremely popular medium in Japan during the second half of the 20th century (Pasfield Neofitou, Sell, & Chan, 2016, p. 2). Therefore, it would produce illuminating insights to look at an established medium in popular culture and how it takes up aspects of environmental citizenship. Since citizenship as a general concept is understood differently in different parts of the world, research in the area would also contribute to increasing our understanding of aspects that are connected to environmental citizenship and the question of how human life and human relationships with the environment we inhabit can be presented and understood through narratives.

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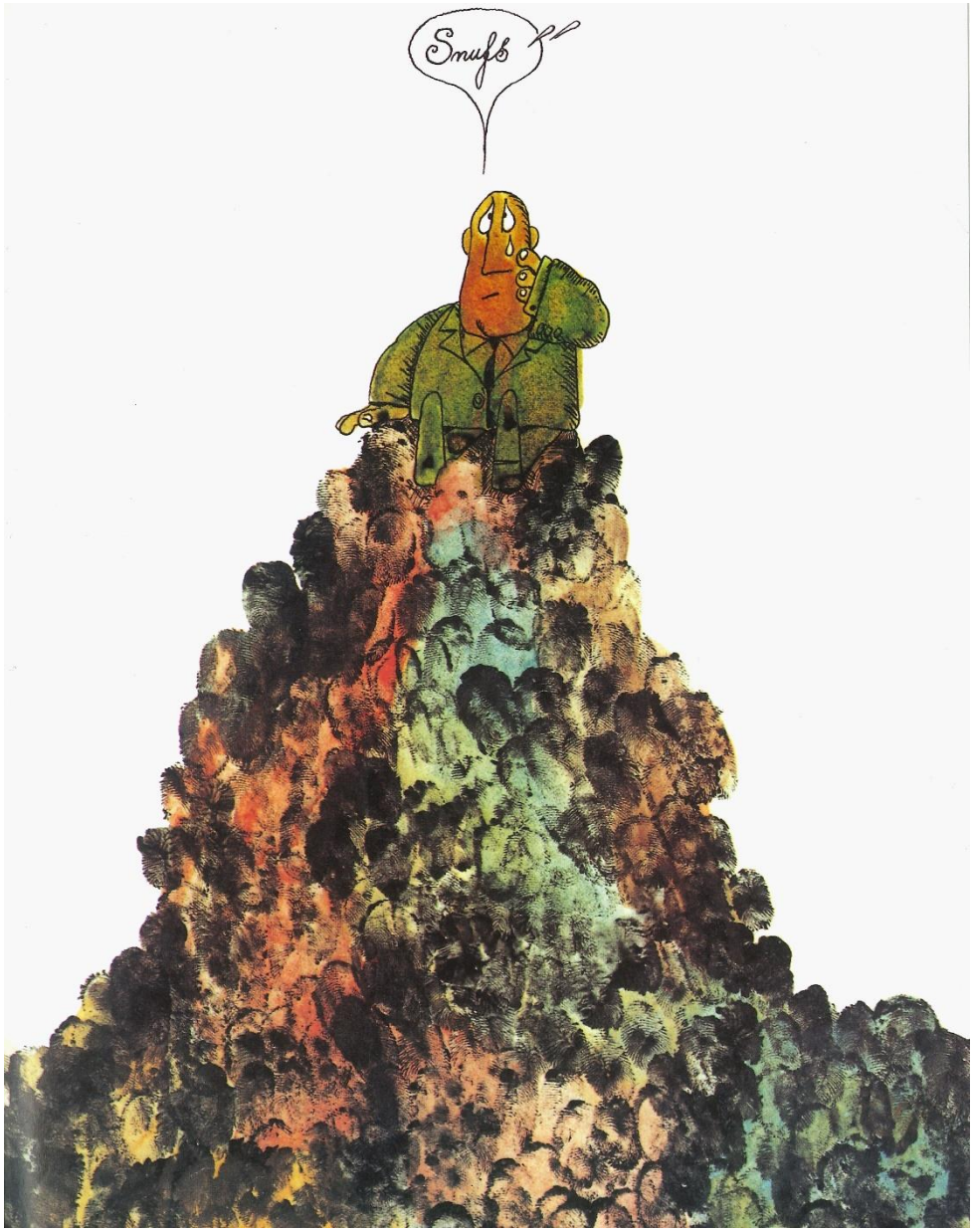
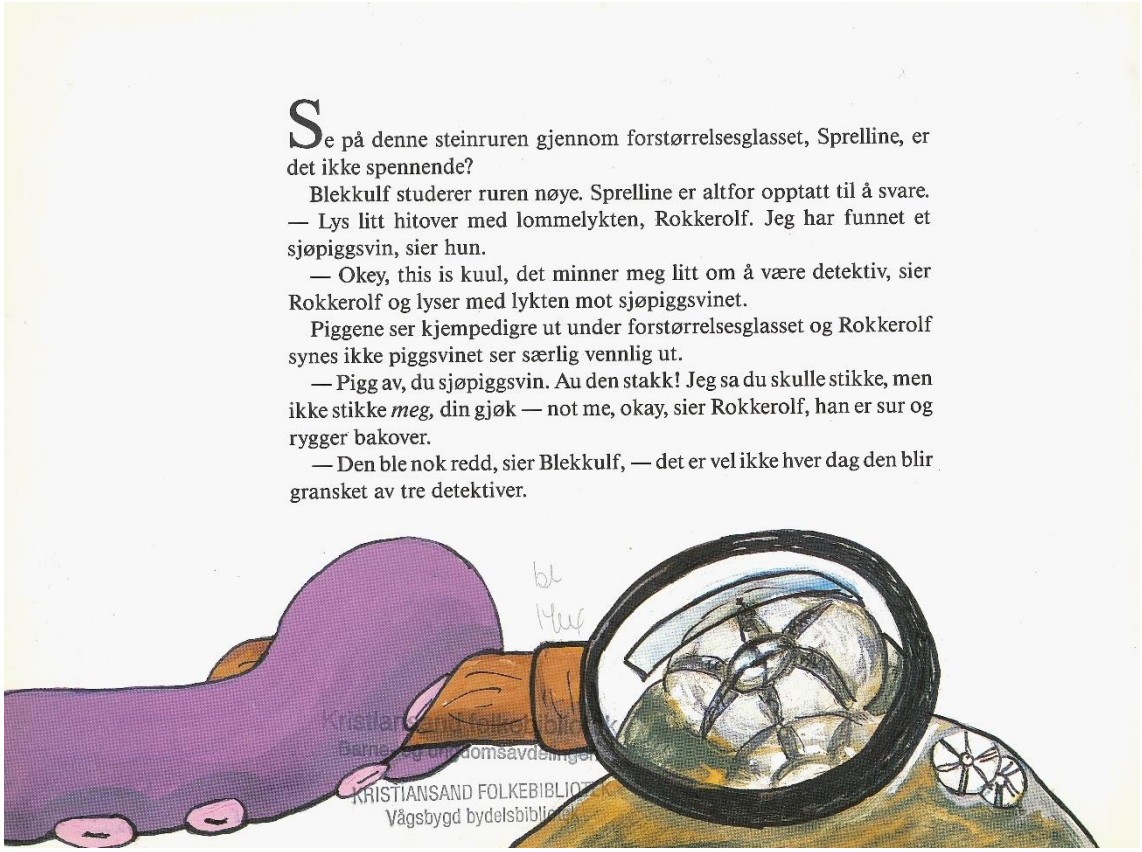
Appendix

(Fig. 5.1: page 11 of *The Blue People and the Caramel Factory*, © Thore Hansen and Gyldendal Forlaget.)



(Fig. 5.2: page 11 of *The Blue People and the Caramel Factory*, © Thore Hansen and Gyldendal Forlaget.)


Se på denne steinruren gjennom forstørrelsesglasset, Sprelline, er det ikke spennende?

Blekkulf studerer ruren nøye. Sprelline er altfor opptatt til å svare.

— Lys litt hitover med lommelykten, Rokkerolf. Jeg har funnet et sjøpiggsvin, sier hun.

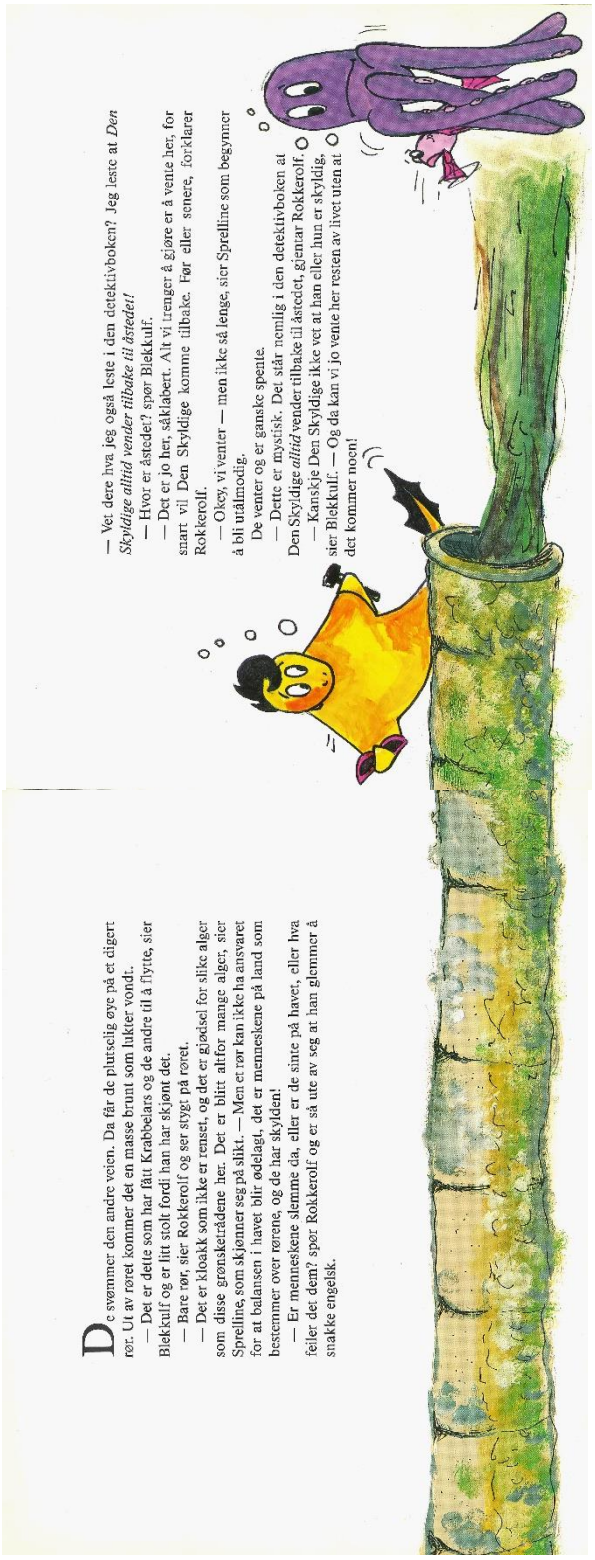
— Okey, this is kuul, det minner meg litt om å være detektiv, sier Rokkerolf og lyser med lykten mot sjøpiggsvinet.

Piggene ser kjempedigre ut under forstørrelsesglasset og Rokkerolf synes ikke piggsvinet ser særlig vennlig ut.

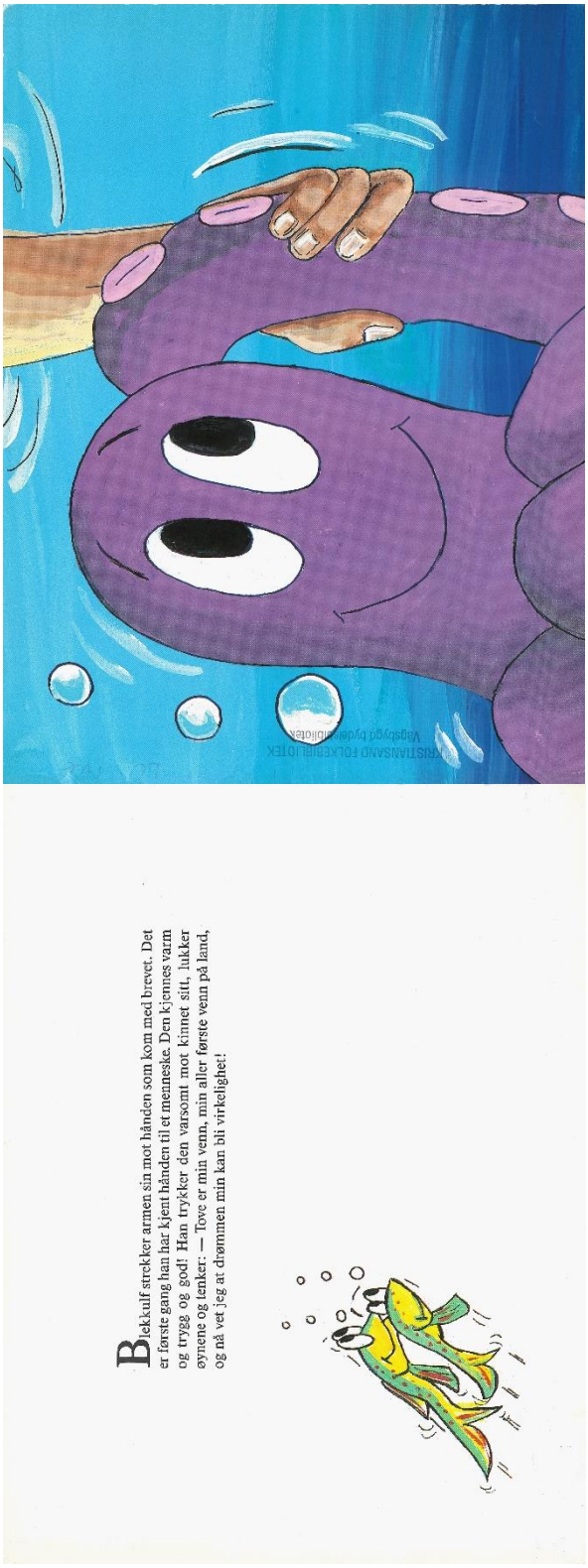
— Pigg av, du sjøpiggsvin. Au den stakk! Jeg sa du skulle stikke, men ikke stikke *meg,* din gjøk — not me, okay, sier Rokkerolf, han er sur og rygger bakover.

— Den ble nok redd, sier Blekkulf, — det er vel ikke hver dag den blir gransket av tre detektiver.

(Fig. 6.1: double-spread 1, verso, of *Blekkulf Becomes an Environmental Detective*, © Bente Roestad and Cappelen Damm Forlaget.)



(Fig. 6.2: double-spread 6 of *Blekkulf Becomes an Environmental Detective*, © Bente Roestad and Cappelen Damm Forlaget.)



(Fig. 6.3: double-spread 12 of *Blekkulf Becomes an Environmental Detective*, © Bente Roestad and Cappelen Damm Forlaget.)

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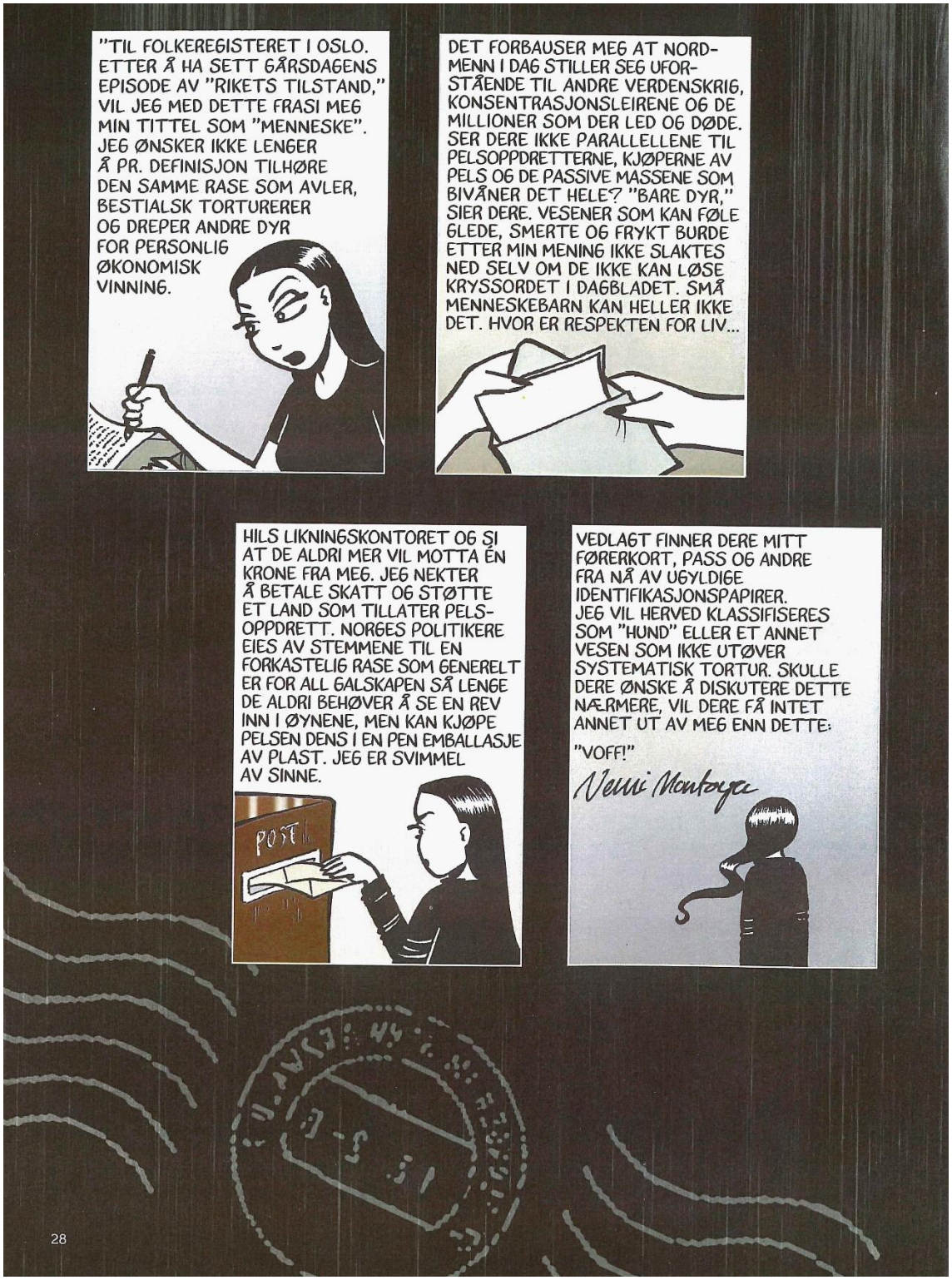
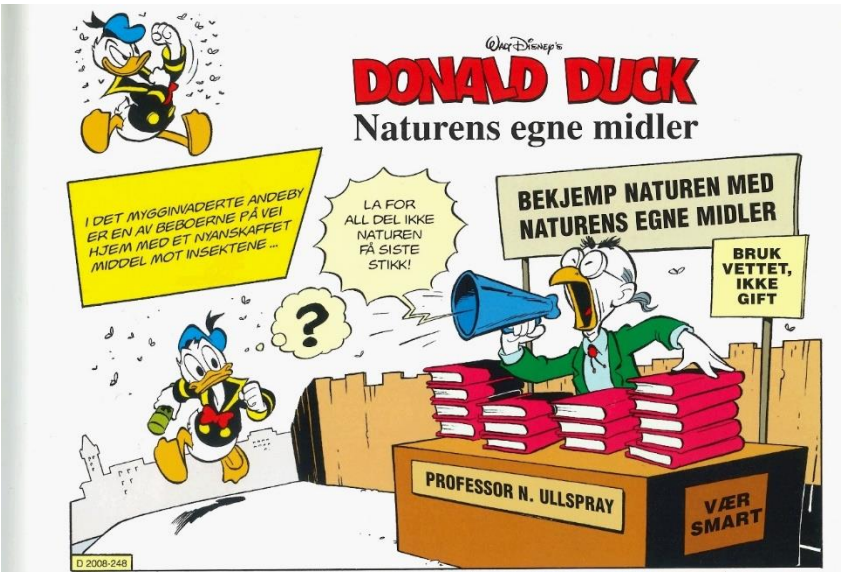
(Fig. 7.2: page 7 of the 2010 special issue of *Nemi*, © Lise Myhre and Gyldendal Forlaget.)

(Fig. 7.3: page 13 of the 2010 special issue of *Nemi*, © Lise Myhre and Gyldendal Forlaget.)



(Fig. 7.4: page 28 of issue 0909 of *Nemi*, © Lise Myhre and Gyldendal Forlaget.)

(Fig. 7.5: page 23 of the 2010 special issue of *Nemi*, © Lise Myhre and Gyldendal Forlaget.)



(Fig. 8.1: page 149, panel 1, of *Fighting Nature with Nature*, © Arild Midthun, Egmont Forlaget, and The Walt Disney Company.)

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(Fig. 8.3: page 41, panel 8, of *The Car of the Future* © Arild Midthun, Egmont Forlaget, and The Walt Disney Company.)

(Fig. 8.4: page 35, panel 2, of *The Mermaid Man* © Arild Midthun, Egmont Forlaget, and The Walt Disney Company.)

(Fig. 8.5: page 37, panel 5, of *The Mermaid Man* © Arild Midthun, Egmont Forlaget, and The Walt Disney Company.)

(Fig. 9.1: double-spread 2 of *Nina Learns Recycling*, © Antonella Durante and Bok Circus Forlag.)

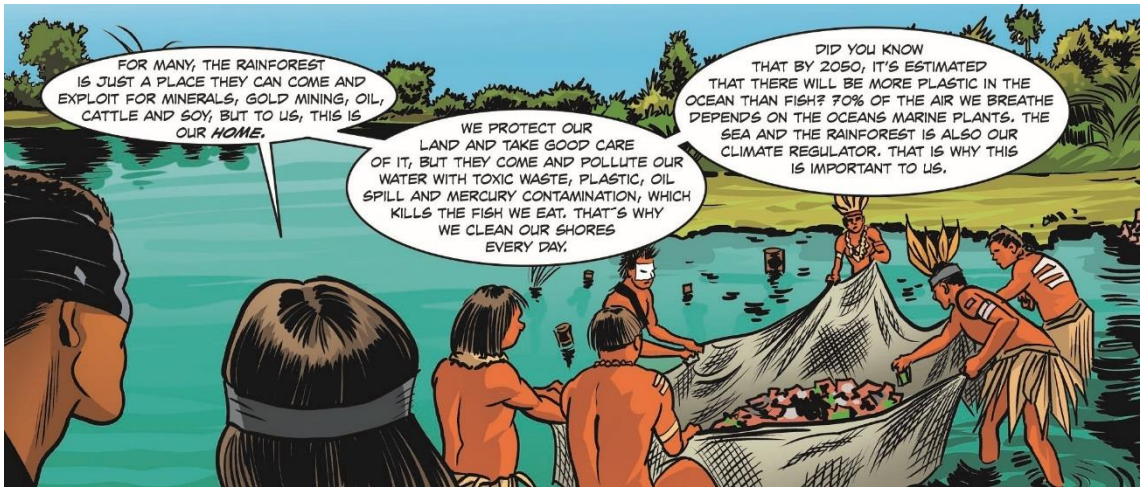
(Fig. 9.2: double-spread 14, recto, of *Nina Learns Recycling*, © Antonella Durante and Bok Circus Forlag.)

Det har gått noen måneder, det er snart høst.
Det har vært så mye å tenke på og mye hardt arbeid.

Det gamle besteforeldre-huset har fått mange nye
og morsomme møbler, men nesten ingenting er nytt.

«Hva skal vi med nye ting, egentlig?» sier mamma.
«Dette er jo mye hyggeligere, og vi har pusset opp tilsammen!»
Nina er helt enig og pappa smiler i skjegget.

(Fig. 9.3: double-spread 13, recto, of *Nina Learns Recycling*, © Antonella Durante and Bok Circus Forlag.)



(Fig. 10.1: page 15, panel 1, of the special issue of *The Urban Legend*, © Josef Tzegai Yohannes and Steve Baker.)

(Fig. 10.2: page 20 of the special issue of *The Urban Legend*, © Josef Tzegai Yohannes and Steve Baker.)

(Fig. 10.3: page 6 of the special issue of *The Urban Legend*, © Josef Tzegai Yohannes and Steve Baker.)

(Fig. 11.1: double-spread 1 of *Yesper and Noper: The Storm*, © Kari Stai and Samlaget.)

(Fig. 11.2: double-spread 12 of *Yesper and Noper: The Storm*, © Kari Stai and Samlaget.)

(Fig. 11.3: double-spread 14, verso, of *Yesper and Noper: The Storm*, © Kari Stai and Samlaget.)