

Peter Bichsel
Kindergeschichten



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Kindergeschichten

Peter Bichsel

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Sieben Geschichten für große und kleine Kinder, für Leser, die nicht aufgehört haben zu fragen, was wäre, wenn. Sieben Geschichten, in denen sonderbare Käuze, scheiternde, lächerliche Rebellen, Nachfahren des Ritters von der traurigen Gestalt es wagen, der Unabänderlichkeit des Bestehenden Schwierigkeiten zu machen. Da ist ein Mann, der weiß, aber nicht glaubt, dass die Erde rund ist; da ist einer, der allen Dingen neue Namen gibt, so dass er von den anderen nicht mehr verstanden wird. Einer, der behauptet, Amerika gibt es gar nicht; oder da ist der Erfinder, der lauter Sachen erfindet, die es schon gibt. Da ist der Mann, der den ganzen Fahrplan auswendig weiß, ohne je gereist zu sein, und der, als er sieht, dass man am Schalter ebensoviel weiß, anfängt, alle Treppenstufen der Welt zu zählen, um etwas zu wissen, was niemand sonst weiß.

Kindergeschichten Details

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Beka Adamashvili says

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Ahmad Sharabiani says

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Amirsaman says

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Markku Kesti says

Hyviä ideoita ja kivoja ajatuksia. Nyt ei vain lukija ollut samalla levelillä kirjailijan kanssa. Voisin kyllä kokeilla tästä jossain vinkkauksessa.

Mariam Kajaia says

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Gika Mikabadze says

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Temuka Zoidze says

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Warwick says

Sitzt du bequem? Then I'll begin.... The stories in this charming collection are written in the style of children's fables – which is fortunate for me, since my reading level in German is approximately that of a slow ten-year-old. (I was alarmed here to encounter the word *Kranschiffwagenzieherkleiderwagenzieher*, meaning 'the person who pulls the wagon which is carrying the clothes of the person pulling the wagon that holds the boat that carries the crane'.) At any rate, the content is for all ages, and Swiss author Peter Bichsel uses the register very cleverly as a way of asking deceptively complex questions.

The characters in these tales are all fretting about knowledge – what they know, and how they know what they know. In one, a man sets off to walk around the world, just to prove that he will in fact end up back where he started; in another, a boy named Columbus invents a country called ‘America’, and is baffled when explorers promptly go out and find it – he can never be sure, afterwards, if the people who say they’ve been there are making it up or not.

Throughout, there is a Wittgensteinian sense of how shaky language is as a basis for knowing things. A character in one story gradually replaces every word in his vocabulary with his mysterious uncle's name, 'Jodok'. Elsewhere, a man starts to swap words around: he calls a *bed* a *picture*, a *man* a *foot*, *freezing* he calls *looking*, *standing* he calls *browsing*, and so on, so that a description of his morning routine begins:

Am Mann blieb der alte Fuß lange im Bild läuten, um neun stellte das Fotoalbum, der Fuß fror auf und blätterte sich auf den Schrank, damit er nicht an die Morgen schaute.

In the man, the old foot rang in picture for a long time; at nine o'clock the photograph album put, and the foot froze up and browsed on the fridge so his mornings wouldn't look.

This is somewhat reminiscent of the obscure Tom Stoppard play *Dogg's Hamlet*, which was also based on a thought experiment in Wittgenstein. But you don't need any philosophical background to enjoy these bite-sized little brain-scramblers – they're good clean epistemological fun for kids of all ages.

Madeleine says

Wonderful tales from a masterful teller (and translator). The characters in the book want to know how they know everything they know, or to forget everything they know, or to re-name everything they know, or to replace everything they know or don't know with something else that they know or don't know.

Peter Bichsel was an elementary school teacher for many years, and in German this collection is called *Kindergeschichten* (*Stories for Children*). The title is given with a wink, however — they are stories for children only insofar as all adults are still children. The English title (taken from another of the stories) works slightly differently — the story in question is about how Columbus (who is a child and sort of court fool) invents a country, and is shocked when someone else manages to find it. He is never quite sure whether he has in fact discovered America or not, and the narrator of the story is equally skeptical, claiming that everyone who says they have gone to America returns with the same stories about cowboys and New York and San Francisco, so how can you believe them? 'America' here is a floating signifier, which might just as easily mean imagination or fragility, representing the careful but contingent illusions upon which we attempt to build stories.

Hamburger's translations do a beautiful job of conveying Bichsel's dry humor, compassion, and elegance — overall it is a terrible shame that this book is out of print.

Mariam Romanadze says

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Shima says

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Mostafa says

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Path Kittinat says

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