



by Felicitas Hoppe  
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Fiction

## Fever 17

### *Fieber 17*

#### review

Felicitas Hoppe is one of Germany's most acclaimed contemporary authors, lauded for her distinctive voice and playful approach. Her latest book, *Fever 17*, will appeal to fans of Rebecca Solnit, interweaving memoir and literary essay to explore themes around childhood and the formative act of storytelling.

*Fever 17* opens with a long-awaited piece of news: test results confirm that the narrator (whom the reader assumes to be Hoppe) isn't merely tired, but is ill. The illness is considered harmless, for it affects neither the body nor the mind but the 'ridiculous little thing left over' – the soul. In an attempt to get to the root of this restless fever, the narrator recalls her childhood stay at an island sanatorium, which it was hoped would help to cure her asthma. She recalls the upset of losing a beloved knitted toy, and describes the weekly postcards she would send home, necessarily dictated as she couldn't yet read or write.

Back in the present day, her doctor advises her to retrace the steps of this experience as a way of confronting her trauma. Instead, she heads to Switzerland with the hope of tracking down a boy she had met on the island – the first boy she ever fell in love with.

Following on from this narrative is an essay which explores why and how we narrate childhood experiences. Always maintaining an ironic sense of humour, the essay interweaves personal anecdotes with

references to classic children's stories, including the Dr Seuss books, the *Pied Piper of Hamelin* and *Pinocchio*. Hoppe examines how as adults we tell and embellish stories about childhood for our own emotional ends, but insists that these stories exert power over us in their turn. The stories we choose to tell, she says, reveal more about our sense of self than anything else. The essay ends with the idea that true biography must be made up of wishful thinking, 'because we are not so much what we are as what we want'.

*Fever 17* is a sensitive and engaging read which explores themes with a great deal of general appeal – from the question of authenticity in autobiography to the relationship between childhood experience and adult identity. With a dreamlike voice and a wry sense of humour, it provides an excellent introduction to one of Germany's foremost contemporary writers.

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I was absorbed in this book from start to finish, drawn in by the personal narrative of the story and then intrigued by the questions explored in the essay. Hoppe's writing is challenging and rewarding to read, and deserves to be enjoyed in English.

*Caroline Summers, Lecturer in Comparative Literary Translation*

[See the book on the publisher's website](#)

## press quotes

*A doubly great Hoppe entry for non-Hoppe connoisseurs. A must-read for Hoppe readers.*

Dierk Wolters, Frankfurter Neue Presse

*Full of humour, lightness, fairy-tale mischievousness, and entertaining reflections, the award-winning author draws the outlines of childhood paradise...*

Bettina Hesse, Books, WDR 5

## about the author



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Born in Hameln in 1960, **Felicitas Hoppe** lives as a writer in Berlin and Leuk. In 1996, her debut *Picknick der Friseure* was published; in 1999, after a trip around the world on a cargo ship, the novel *Pigafetta* followed; in 2003, *Paradiese, Übersee*; in 2004, *Verbrecher und Versager*; in 2006, *Johanna*; in 2008, *Iwein Löwenritter*; in 2009, *Sieben Schätze Der beste Platz der Welt*; in 2010, *Abenteuer – was ist das?*; in 2011, *Grünes Ei mit Speck*, a translation of the American children's author Dr. Seuss; in 2012, the autobiographical novel *Hoppe*; and most recently, in 2018, the novel *Prawda. Eine amerikanische Reise*. Felicitas Hoppe has received numerous awards for her work, including the Georg Büchner Prize and, most recently, the Grand Prize of the German Literature Fund.

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