

## Abstract

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*Free Girls Before Pippi. Ester Blenda Nordström and Karin Michaëlis: Astrid Lindgren's predecessors*

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The dissertation takes as a point of departure that 1945 is usually mentioned as a start for a new type of Swedish children's literature. In the majority of handbooks in and reviews of the history of Swedish children's literature this is repeated as a fact. A reason for this is that three famous authors of children's literature in Swedish all had their breakthrough this year: Lennart Hellsing, Tove Jansson and Astrid Lindgren. They are regarded as the most important examples of the new type of children's literature. Especially Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Långstrump* [*Pippi Longstocking*] has been seen as a symbol for the free child and for the revolt against the adult world and the stiff rules of etiquette.

At the same time as 1945 has been assigned as the birth date for a new children's literature the general view of the preceding period, between the two world wars, has been that it was stagnant and uninteresting. In this study, the hypothesis was that the new did not emerge from an empty space. After extensive reading of children's literature from the time between the wars it was discovered that there were new tendencies in this literature similar to those ascribed to the literature from the period after 1945. A more detailed analysis was performed comparing Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Långstrump* with works by the Swedish author Ester Blenda Nordström and the Danish author Karin Michaëlis. The results show that the children's literature produced between the wars was much more complex than previously stated and has several characteristics similar to the literature produced after 1945. As a consequence it seems necessary to modify the notion of 1945 as the definite starting point for the modern Swedish children's book.

A comparative analysis of the three authors is used as verification in the thesis. The analysis use among others the theories of Bachtin about the "popular laugh culture" and shows that the main characters in the books by Nordström and Michaëlis to the same extent as Pippi Långstrump illustrates the norm-breaking and independent child. The similarities between the work of Astrid Lindgren and Nordström and Michaëlis are obvious in terms of content as well as in expressions and type of language. The main focus in this dissertation is a textual analysis against a background of social context analysis. The conclusions state that there clearly were predecessors to the work of Astrid Lindgren. To simply state that 1945 was the year when the modern children's book was born thus no longer seems relevant.

**KEYWORDS:** *Astrid Lindgren, Pippi Långstrump; Ester Blenda Nordström; Karin Michaëlis; Michael Bachtin; History of Swedish children's literature; Children's literature between the world wars; Books about girls, Girls books.*

# FRIA FLICKOR FÖRE PIPPI

Ester Blenda Nordström och Karin Michaëlis:  
Astrid Lindgrens föregångare

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