

— Olle Widhe, »Max Lundgren and the Development of Children's Rights in Swedish Children's Literature around '68«

— A B S T R A C T —

The purpose of this article is to explore the relationship between left-wing children's literature and the concept of children and children's rights in Sweden around '68. The main focus is on the picture book *Sagan om Lotta från Dösjöbro* (1969) [The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro], by the Swedish children's book author Max Lundgren (1937–2005) and the illustrator Fibben Hald (1933–). This picture book is analysed against the backdrop of the debate about state-funded picture books that Max Lundgren prompted shortly after its publication. Taking my cue from Kimberley Reynolds's *Radical Children's literature* (2007), I argue that the verbal and the visual in radical picture books of this kind can be said to stimulate aesthetic and social innovation, and thus pave the way for the transformation of culture and concepts such as childhood, children's subjectivity and children's rights. Portrayals of power relations between children and adults in children's literature can therefore be said to generate social norms when it comes to interaction between adults and children; and these norms are of considerable importance for the development of a children's rights discourse. This seems to be especially true regarding the picture book, because adults and children tend as a rule to read picture books, and look at the pictures therein, together.

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■—Olle Widhe—■

■—MAX LUNDGREN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN SWEDISH CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE AROUND '68—■

■—In the 1970s, it was easy to find left-wing oriented children's literature on the Scandinavian book market. According to the influential scholar of Swedish children's literature Lena Kåreland, the authors of these books regarded their primary responsibility as being to inform their readers about contemporary political and social conditions in order to develop awareness and solidarity among the young.¹ But even though this might seem somewhat idealistic, it was in fact a radical departure from what were regarded at the time as the capitalist values governing the Swedish welfare state.² In line with this conviction, many literary critics of the period demanded a children's literature that neither swept the »class struggle under the carpet«, nor let the »doctrine of private property« go unchallenged.³

The radical critics and children's book authors around '68 did not merely seek to liberate the working class from capitalist oppression. They also wanted to liberate children from the domination and control of adults in order to create a more egalitarian relationship between them. This ideological vision is often linked to a new anti-authoritarian understanding of children, and thus interwoven with a new conception of children's rights. As the Danish writer and historian Torben Weinreich has recently shown, many of the socialist children's books of the time were supposed to uncover and explain the social order as a whole. That is, not only deal with the class struggle and the presumed conflict between labour and capital, but also reveal unhealthy family constellations, gender orders and child/adult relationships.⁴ The once much celebrated Swedish children's book writer Max Lundgren not only condemned discrimination on the basis of age in the late 1960s, he also equated the struggle for children's rights with the conflict between social classes.⁵

In this article I want to draw attention to Max Lundgren and the increasing interest in children's rights around '68. Lundgren was both a productive and influential writer, publishing children's books every year throughout his 40-year career; he also wrote numerous screenplays for television in the 1970s and 1980s. Further, his books were translated into several other languages, although primarily Danish and Norwegian.

However, my focus is on the picture book collaboration with the well-known artist Fibben Hald, *Sagan om Lotta från Dösjöbro* (1969) [The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro], and the debate about state-funded picture books that Lundgren prompted shortly after its publication.⁶ The overarching purpose of my return to this now consistently overlooked picture book, and the historical context surrounding it, is to gain more knowledge about the relationship between children's literature and the emerging concept of children's rights around '68.

— CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS —

Max Lundgren was born and raised in a working class family in the south of Sweden. He had left-wing sympathies from an early age, although he did not engage in any political party until the early 1970s, when he joined the Swedish Social Democratic Party. After 1985, he worked as a delegate responsible for children's culture, and was thus politically active at a high level.⁷ In the Nordic countries he is known for writing children's literature with an unfailing commitment to global rights issues and his books are often permeated with socialist values. At the same time, he is considered less programmatic and more politically elusive when compared to the radical Marxist writers of the time, such as Sven Wernström.⁸ Lundgren's interests in human rights issues make him a forerunner of the more unambiguous human rights literature written for children by the Swedish-Romanian author and human rights activist Katarina Taikon. In his books *Omin Hambbe i Slättköping* (1966) [Omin Hambbe in Slättköping] and *Pojken med Guldbyxorna* (1967) [The Boy with Golden Trousers], he pointed unwaveringly at the social and economic injustice that existed between the privileged countries of the industrial world and the developing countries of the Third World.⁹

In *Omin Hambbe*, Lundgren portrays an African boy who is adopted and thenceforth moves to the little village Slättköping in Sweden. The story is told with a great sense of humour in the spirit of Mark Twain, and is written and published for young people. The question of human rights is one of the book's main themes. As a matter of fact, the struggle for the rights of black people is explained on the first page, and the theme appears several times throughout the narrative. It is not without significance that the question of human rights surfaces when the different worlds of Slättköping and Africa are drawn together by a television broadcast:

— You would think that Slättköping is situated far away from Africa. But it isn't, it leans against the mountains and grasslands of Africa. The television brought us pictures, we read headlines in the newspapers, dead black as

a coalminer from Billesholm, and there were photos; and then suddenly a human being stepped out of the picture, turned around in the spring weather of Slättköping and said: give us human rights!¹⁰

News reports covering social deprivation in Africa sent a clear message to the privileged people living in a welfare state in Slättköping and Sweden. It is this picture of otherness that foregrounds the question of human rights in the book. A point to which I will shortly return is that the TV-medium takes on a specific meaning for Lundgren that is closely connected to the negotiation of childhood in his writings. In a way, the leftist orientation of certain works of children's literature can partly be said to spring from the advance of new technologies that revealed a breakdown of human rights in different parts of the world.

The title *Omin Hambbe in Slättköping* points to the juxtaposition of the small world of an imaginary Swedish country village *Slättköping* and the Third World, expansive and external in equal measure, with its remote inhabitants. This juxtaposition is sustained through the news reports mentioned above. The picture book »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro«, however, introduces global rights issues in the context of a similar small town reality, but does so in a media-specific way. That is to say, both the text and the images in the picture book represent the question of children's rights in dialogue with television reports and pictures concerning contemporary war conflicts and mass starvation (such as the Vietnam War and the famine in Biafra).

The picture book is suitable for the analysis of different historical conceptions of children and childhood. According to Nina Christensen, picture books are usually written for smaller children, and because children in picture books »are supposed to function as role models« that can be identified with, these books can be said to have a strong socializing function.¹¹ Thus, in picture books for small children you can find relationships between children and adults where the concept of the child is performed in specific ways. This makes them interesting in a sociohistorical context, particularly if you want to focus on radical children's literature as a children's rights-bearing discourse and a means of civic socialization. Christensen also maintains that the picture book as a medium is interesting because it makes use of two different code systems: the verbal and the visual. Consequently, picture books give us a good opportunity to study the simultaneous fictionalization and performance of the child in text and image. With Kimberley Reynolds, one might add that the verbal and the visual in children's literature seem to be especially suited to stimulating and nurturing aesthetic and social innovation, and thus

to prepare ways for new concepts (such as for example the concept of children's subjectivity and children's rights).¹²

The opinion that the child has certain rights that are worth defending is by no means invented with the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the end of the 1980s. During the last hundred years or so, Scandinavia has acquired a worldwide reputation for attending to the child as an individual with her own rights and for making the nation-state responsible when it comes to safeguarding these rights.¹³ In another context, I suggest that the history of children's rights can be traced back to at least the middle of the 19th century and that it has a special place in the history of Scandinavian children's literature. In fact, the notion of children's rights is closely connected to the question of what it means to experience the world as a child, and the problem of children's subjectivities has engaged Scandinavian writers of children's literature in different ways for at least one-and-a-half centuries.¹⁴

Scholars of the history of childhood often point to the fact that the emergence of classical modernity at the end of the 18th century gave birth to a new concept of the child. Before that, the first years in life were mainly regarded as a period that the child was supposed to leave behind as soon as possible. In the wake of Rousseau, however, childhood was embraced as a romantic vision and regarded as something more positive, something to be cherished.¹⁵ But the emphasis put on the value of childhood also made the notion of childhood subjectivity relevant in a new way, along with the question of how adults were supposed to treat children. In simple terms, this means that if children had previously been perceived for the most part as possessions or things that adults could basically handle as they pleased, then the child now slowly came to the fore as an individual subject. With modernity, one could argue, the child emerged as a person with valuable experiences, capabilities and intentions, and adults were obliged to relate to these unique individuals on a rational basis, as well as with compassion.¹⁶

The reading of children's literature can be regarded as important for how the child understands his or her own rights and responsibilities.¹⁷ This seems to be true today, as well as in the history of reading. Therefore, it is important to clarify how children's books establish moral values concerning what adults are permitted to do with children and vice versa. Children's literature thus not only displays views concerning what children ought to be or how they should behave. It also carries attitudes concerning how adults are (not) permitted to behave towards children. In addition to this, children's literature asserts the space children can claim for themselves in different settings, such as in their families, schools or society in general. Desmond Manderson and others observe that linking children's literature and children's rights does not only mean stressing

how children's books communicate ideas concerning the rights and responsibilities of children. These books must also be considered as a bedrock when it comes to establishing rights: »Children's literature is not a series of texts *about* the law. It is a source of Law.«¹⁸

This implies that children's books not only mirror children's rights as conceived of at a given historical moment. They also actively generate and perform the rights of the child in different historical contexts. Following Reynolds, one could say that children's literature »contributes to the social and aesthetic transformation of culture by, for instance, encouraging readers to approach ideas, issues, and objects from new perspectives and so prepare the way for change«.¹⁹ Portrayals of power relations between children and adults in children's literature can thus be said to generate social norms regarding the interaction between adults and children that are of considerable importance for the development of a children's rights discourse. This seems to be especially true when it comes to the picture book, because the adult and the child typically read these books and look at the pictures together.

At the beginning of the 1970s, Max Lundgren clarified his view of the uniqueness of picture books, explaining that his picture books are not supposed to be read by the child alone. They are instead written with the intention of activating an exchange between children and adults. They are, so to speak, meant to invite the adult to ponder important questions together with the child. The function of his picture books, Lundgren contends, is to make the parent »think« and »try to explain« for themselves, as well as to the child.²⁰ Against this backdrop, Lundgren and Hald's picture book »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro« becomes particularly interesting, as it can be said to problematize the relationship between adults and children with a focus on human rights. I will return to »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbo« in the second half of this article, for a closer reading. First I want to explore how the rights of the child was discussed in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the role that children's literature was assigned when it comes to the construction of the Swedish welfare state.

— THE ROMANTIC CHILD AND THE POLITICAL CHILD —

Max Lundgren and Fibben Hald's picture book »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro« is an example of how left-wing oriented children's literature around '68 gave political shape, purpose and direction to tropes of children and childhood. It displays a romantic mode of representation that emphasizes the positive light of children and envisions childhood as a state of natural freedom and innocence. But at the same time as it imagines childhood as an idyllic realm separated from

the adult world, it also negotiates the presumed difference between child and adult by claiming that children as well as adults have a voice, agency and responsibility. It does so by pointing towards the prevailing political and social despair of the outside world, insisting that there is a need for change and that children must engage in this change.

Childhood is not therefore performed as a place that the reading child is forced to leave as soon as possible in order to mature and acquire the adult citizen's ability to change the world. The opposite is truer: if you want to save the world it is important *not* to grow up, instead you should remain a child even as an adult. As we shall see, the imagined border between children and adults is thus blurred in two respects: while children's rights and responsibility are in many ways similar to the rights of adults, the ideal adult is compared to a child. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the questioning of conventional child-adult relationships constitutes an important issue in critical discussions of political children's literature. This questioning of power relations not only construes children and childhood as political, it also involves a new way of thinking and performing children's human rights.

Lena Kåreland has noted that, during the 1960s, children in Sweden were regarded to a much greater extent as human

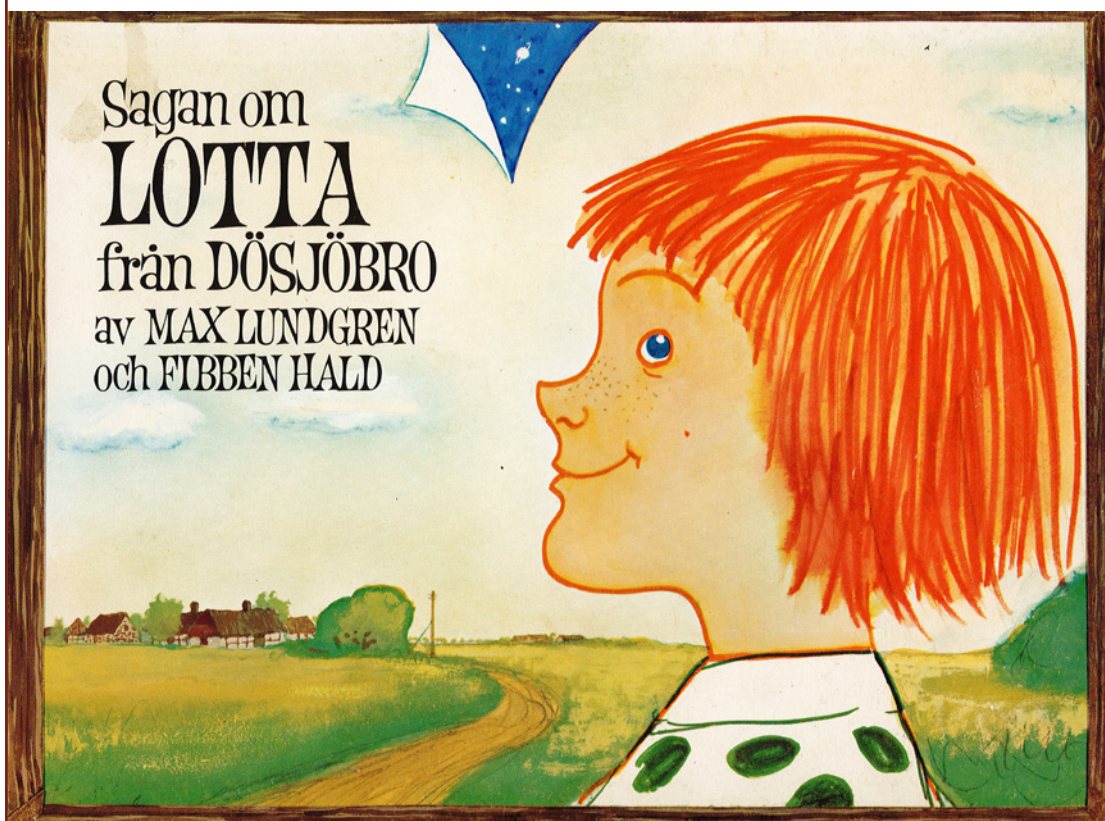


Image 1. Front cover of Max Lundgren and Fibben Hald's »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro«.

beings, just as the concept of youth began to be valued more than ever before.²¹ Another way of putting this is that the child was viewed as a subject with individual agency, and childhood in many respects equated with adulthood: children's voices were supposed to be heard and their points of view considered.²² Here the question of children's human rights becomes obvious. Max Lundgren provides a good example of this, when arguing that children have the right to picture books that explain political dilemmas and help them understand the world. Taking the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a starting point, he maintains that if all human beings have the right to information, knowledge and understanding, then all children must too, otherwise we do not think of »children as human beings«. ²³ The challenge was, one might argue, how to encourage the child to engage in the quest for social change while, at the same time, still remaining a child. This manoeuvre inevitably forces writers and theorists of children's literature to interrogate what in fact a child is.

Around '68, there was an ongoing discussion about how children's writers could most effectively engage themselves and their readers in the cause of social progress and the development of the welfare state.²⁴ Lundgren participated in this discussion in different ways, for example, in a call for

Så som människorna ställt till det på jorden tyckte Gud att vår sol skulle flyttas

för att lysa på andra världar, som bättre tog vara på den.
 - Det är orättvist, sa Amerikas president.
 - Det är mycket sorgligt, sa borgmästarn i Malmö.
 Men det fanns ingen på hela jorden som vågade åka till Gud och tala honom till rätta förrän Lotta anmälde sig.
 ... så här skrev hon

Hej FN!

Mitt namn är Lotta Bergström från Sverige, Skåne i en liten by som heter Dösjöbro. Jag har hört talas om att solen ska flyttas. Vi tycker alla här att det är tråkigt. Sommarlovet blir inget roligt längre. Det blir bara vinter hela tiden. Inga växter blir det heller och inga solkatter och

ingen midsommar och inga maskrosor och ingen blir brun. Jag har hört att det inte finns någon som vågar åka till Gud och klaga, men jag vågar, för jag tycker det är fel, och mej kan han inte göra något illa, så därför vill jag gärna resa.

*Tjing!
 Lotta Bergström*

Bonniers

Pris 13:50

Image 2. Back cover of »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro«. The back cover displays a letter from Lotta to the United Nations.

state-funded, high quality picture books for small children.²⁵ This call was part of a larger children's culture debate that had taken place in Sweden and the other Nordic countries during the second half of the 1960s. The renowned critic and children's writer Gunila Ambjörnsson led the debate and had a massive impact on what was to become the new vision of a truly political children's book. Together with Kerstin Stjärne, she is usually regarded as the most radical critics of the period.²⁶ Ambjörnsson's thought-provoking texts about children and children's literature in Sweden's largest newspapers, as well as her book with the provocative title *Skräpkultur åt barnen* (1968) [Low Culture for Our Children], placed her at the centre of the new orientation towards the Left, which was also manifested in Scandinavian children's literature and culture at the end of the 1960s.

In »Low Culture for Our Children«, Ambjörnsson argued against what she considered the commercialization of children's culture. The error in contemporary children's culture was not only, however, that it had been allowed to become stuck in the jaws of capitalism and the pursuit of economic profit. Ambjörnsson also regarded children's culture as detached and romanticized, depicting an obsolete and starry-eyed view of children and childhood. She therefore explicitly turned against what she termed the romantic conception of childhood, that is, the »myth of the pure and innocent child who lives in a different world than ours, a child who must be protected at any cost because they can neither understand nor handle the hard-hitting reality of adulthood«. ²⁷ In an attempt to make children's culture more radical, she insisted that writers of children's books should convey a stronger sense of reality and realism. To put it bluntly, children's books had to function as tools for adults wishing to explain the world's political conflicts and unjustified inequality.²⁸ In the case of Ambjörnsson, this didn't necessarily mean that radical children's books always had to give political or moral lessons that were grounded in left-wing ideology, even if this seemed to be the implication. Instead, political momentum was to be found in a new range of subjects. Writers had to turn to »new spaces and realities with curiosity and courage«. ²⁹ Yet, as will soon become evident, the abolition of romanticism and the abandoning of idealized representations of childhood were not completely realized. It would be truer to say that the romantic view of the child endures in the literature of '68, but takes on a new narrative function in relation to the reader.

The political turn in children's literature at the end of the 1960s is well researched, and related historical events explained in various ways. Some researchers highlight the attention given to general political issues throughout the contemporary cultural debate and suggest that this shapes the conditions

for Nordic children's literature as well.³⁰ In this context some researchers maintain that both children's and adult literature took a political turn with the escalation of the Vietnam War, and the reactions of intellectuals to the situation in the Third World.³¹ At the same time, it is fair to say that the situation in the world at large during the 1960s was far from unique – people had been suffering as a result of war throughout the 20th century. The »postwar« period is, however, distinguished by instantaneous and rigorous news reports from different hotspots around the world. It is safe to say that violence, poverty, and injustice propelled itself right into the Swedish welfare state and occupied ordinary people's everyday life, creating a world of stark contrasts that seeped into Swedish children's lives too. The political turn in children's literature can thus be seen as a result of the breakthrough that television made in Sweden and the other Nordic countries in the 1960s.³²

— THE KNOWING CHILD —

As we shall see later, the TV media takes on a specific meaning in Lundgren's picture book. In this way it was a mirror of its time. Contemporary critics experienced the introduction of new media technology as effecting an explicit change in children's social reality. Gunila Ambjörnsson observes how broadcasting leads to world events permeating the world of children, thus exposing them to brutal pictures of pollution, war, famine, poverty, and refugees in an unprecedented manner. As a result, she continues, neither children nor adults live in isolation from the world around them anymore.³³ According to Ambjörnsson, this is one of the main reasons why the line of demarcation between adults and children is disappearing. »The child« is a relational concept that is comprehended only in relation to its opposite, »the adult«.³⁴ But with new media, cultural practices through which one becomes a child in relation to those who are not children seem to change. I want to argue that developments in radical children's literature during the 1960s and 1970s is possible to understand only if one focuses on these changes. These developments are intertwined with a new conception of children's rights, that is, with new power relations between children and adults, as well as between literature for children and literature for adults. Or as Ambjörnsson puts it: »It's all about integrating children's culture in the culture of grown ups. Then the rest ought to solve itself.«³⁵

Kerstin Stjärne is another critic of the time who experienced new media technology changing children's social reality. At the beginning of the 1970s, she highlights how watching television transforms the meaning of being a child. She also argues that there is a need for a children's literature that takes this new social reality into account:

— But these things that we as adults have been talking about for years, and that most kids know a great deal about through TV and other mass media, suddenly became controversial in children's books. For traditionally, everything looks different in children's books. You are not allowed to mention Vietnam, the landlord is expected to be the poor people's friend and benefactor, and if there is going to be environmental protection it has to be children planting flowers in the asphalt jungle or cleaning up the forest.³⁶

From Stjärne's point of view, knowledge of international conflicts seems to have altered the meaning of childhood even if children's literature doesn't change at the same pace. In an attempt to replace the traditional conception of the romantic child, who had to be protected from the problems and complexities of the adult world, Stjärne formulates a new conception of children typical among critics during this time. We could term this *the knowing child*.³⁷ The knowing child has knowledge of the world around them through television and other mass media. In short, the knowing child knows things that had previously been hidden from them and thus enters the domain of adults. In some cases, they even know *more* about the solutions to political issues than adults do, as in »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro«.

Both Ambjörnsson and Stjärne point to the influence of mass media on children's new social conditions, and the changing relationship between children and adults. Ten years later, such arguments provide the foundations of Neil Postman's much acclaimed but conservative book, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1982), which was soon translated into Swedish. In his book, Postman argues that adulthood and childhood were once divided by the ability to read complex texts. In the modern period, only educated and mature individuals were able to read and therefore only they had access to hidden knowledge. However, during the second half of the 20th century, this rift between adults and children began to lose its validity at a dazzling speed, according to Postman. This was mainly due to the fact that television had entered children's homes, giving them access to the secrets of the adult world before they had completed the learning processes that adults had been through. What can be termed »adult knowledge« could now be acquired prior to literacy, because watching TV did not require any special reading skills at all: everything is equally available to all and no secrets or sorrows can be withheld. The romantic understanding of childhood as a period of innocence and bliss that demanded special care and protection disappeared.³⁸ However, unlike the writers and critics of radical children's literature during the 1970s, Postman largely regarded this development as being unsound and he wished for a nostalgic

return to the period when being a child was different from being an adult.

Max Lundgren, who is considered to be one of the most influential writers of the time, argued consistently that children's authors always have to tell children the truth, even if this truth is cruel or depressing. He simply believed that children had the same right to information about their world as adults. In one of his essays, he writes »there will always be people who think that you should hide certain truths from children. I don't belong to them, and I hope that they decrease in number as our insight develops«. ³⁹

As mentioned earlier, this attitude can be seen as a frontline assault on the traditional romantic view as expressed in the majority of Swedish children's literature up to the 1960s. At the same time, radical writers conceived of the political child in romantic terms of their own. This is not only the case in Swedish children's literature. The Finno-Swedish children's writer Antonia Zilliacus makes a similar claim in the Finnish national newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet*.⁴⁰ She first asks her readers if children should be protected from grim reality, so that they can remain children for as long as possible. She then poses the counter question and wonders if children should instead have access to true information about the world surrounding them. According to Zilliacus, children have the right to know and adults should not impart any illusions about the world to their children or hide from them the truth about reality.

From this perspective, it might seem as if the so-called romantic view of the child stands in unambiguous opposition to the concept of the knowing child. However, a closer look reveals that Zilliacus does not abandon the idea of the romantic child. Instead she transforms some aspects of it and formulates the knowing child as superior to the adult in ways reminiscent of the romantics, and their sacralizing of children and childhood. In fact, childhood is depicted as a special stage in the life of humans and the child as a provider of capabilities and knowledge that the individual is in danger of losing upon entering adulthood:

— Children have the right to know. And children very often have a much more factual and unbiased attitude towards the surrounding world than adults, who are laden with taboos and attitudes of a different sort.⁴¹

According to Zilliacus, the child has a right to know about what happens in the world; it is impossible to shut her out in a world of her own. But this it is not only because children are supposed to grow up and become well-informed and responsible citizens. Children need information to feel safe and to be able to handle their fears. More importantly, Zilliacus argues

that the child can contribute in a special way, and sometimes more accurately than adults, to the development of a just society. Rather than hiding information, »you ought to give the children some sense of solidarity and responsibility so they can join in and eliminate the social injustice that now prevails.«⁴²

This tension between the romantic and the political conception of childhood can be viewed in light of the opposition between illusion and truth, as well as fantasies and facts. The fairy tale was none-too-seldomly deemed to be an escapist and unreal genre, and rejected in favour of the supposed realism and factual truth-telling in radical children's literature.⁴³ But the distinction was not always clear-cut. Max Lundgren's writing is a good example of how the categories upheld by critics became fuzzy in children's literature of the time. This becomes obvious if you look at »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro«. At the same time as being a fairy tale, the book clearly engages in contemporary political questions of global justice.

Lundgren was sometimes criticized for not letting his political engagement take the form of the social realism that Ambjörnsson and other critics had launched so forcefully. In connection with the publication of Lundgren's *Regnbågskriget* (1968) [The Rainbow War], for example, several reviewers welcomed his honourable attempt to engage with the Vietnam War.



Image 3. Images of immigration, war and death in »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro«.

At the same time, they dismissed his book for being too much of an unreal fairy tale and a dreamlike fantasy. Kristin Stjärne believes that Lundgren, without a doubt, had the ambition to tell the truth about war to children but instead depicted war in »a such a general playful fairytalelike way that it becomes noncommittal«. ⁴⁴ Reviewer Lars Olof Franzén makes a similar objection, insisting that the story takes place in far too vague a setting, lacks credibility and contains exaggerations that do not belong in contemporary children's books. ⁴⁵

— CHILDREN AS MINORITY GROUP —

Max Lundgren associated social inequalities with the struggle for children's rights in different ways. In *Omin Hambbe in Slättköping*, he associates the privileged countries of Europe and the exploited countries of Africa with the relationship between adults and children. Here the juxtaposition of black people and children is not, however, to be understood as a colonial reflex to view non-European people as immature. Instead, it highlights the asymmetrical power relations between adults and children, by comparing them to the colonial attitude of whites towards non-whites. The young narrator opposes the way that black people are regarded as »underdeveloped« and thus questions the hierarchy between privileged and developing countries. At



Image 4. Images of poverty and suffering in »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro«.

the same time, the situation of Africans is frequently amplified through the juxtaposition with the situation of the Swedish boys in relation to the adults surrounding them. In this way, both young people and black people are distinguished as minority groups with whom Europeans and adults can apparently do as they please. The parallel culminates when the adopted black child Omin Hambbe and the Swedish small town boy Gustav-Sixten have a friendly fight for fun. The adult teacher misjudges the situation as an assault and disciplines the white boy with a hard slap on the ear:

- Don't you understand that these things happen in Africa, our teacher said, that white people attack coloureds ...
- The teacher is the only white here, Gustav-Sixten said. They looked at each other.
 - If it's going to be like this, Gustav-Sixten said eventually, it is better that one goes and demonstrates for human rights.⁴⁶

Neither children nor black people, it seems, are privileged in terms of human rights. Only the adult teacher enjoys supremacy as concerns rights, since he is »white«. Gustav-Sixten's line is characteristic of the way that Max Lundgren encourages children to engage in the fight for global human rights during this time, and he returns to the rights of children in several different contexts.

In his article »Hjälp bilderboken!« (1971) [Help the Picture Book], Max Lundgren discussed the rights of the child in connection with the picture book. In the aftermath of Amjörns-son's above-mentioned »Low Culture for Our Children«, he argued that the Swedish welfare state ought to financially support quality picture books to counter low popular culture imported for children from the USA and Germany. According to Lundgren, quality Swedish picture books convey important values that adults have to defend. Among other things, he argued that quality children's books make their readers more independent and less prejudiced. Lundgren emphasized that children constitute a group without power, a circumstance that adults must recognize:

- There are several minorities in this country. It has become a virtuous tradition that we try as much as we can to protect these. We have many minorities. Children are one of them. We need people to speak for their cause.⁴⁷

Children are recognized here as a minority group without a voice of their own, paving the way toward viewing them instead as rights-bearers in a way that corresponds to the Convention

on the Rights of the Child two decades later. As a children's writer, Lundgren evidently played a part in promulgating a view of children as human beings with a distinct set of rights, rather than as passive objects of care and charity. The notion that children's literature writers can give a voice to the child's way of seeing, and depict the logic of the child's way of thinking and experiencing is a common theme in the history of Nordic children's literature since at least the middle of the 19th century.⁴⁸ But the opinion that children's writers should speak for the child and thus defend their rights becomes more widespread during the second half of the 20th century. In the mid 1960s, Lennart Hellsing proclaimed that children *are* human beings, not only *becoming* human beings.⁴⁹ In the early 1970s, several children's writers participated in different children's rights movements, including for example Gunnel Linde, who founded the voluntary and non-profit organization Children's Right in Society (Bris, Barnens rätt i samhället) with the purpose of campaigning, among other things, against corporal punishment.⁵⁰

Max Lundgren contributed to the children's rights movement when he proclaimed that children, like every human being, have »the same right« to art and literature as well as information, knowledge and understanding.⁵¹ In his defence of the rights of the child, he brings adults and children closer to one another as rights-bearers. At the same time, he argued that childhood is a superior state in comparison to the process of degeneration that afflicts people upon reaching adulthood:

— Essentially I'm a pretty pessimistic human being. For example, I'm convinced that you and I, who call ourselves adults, are already lost. Lost in the sense that we don't have the freedom we think we do, we're not sufficiently independent, we don't see things clearly, we are replete with prejudices that occasionally pop up like dark trolls in our eyes and mouths. Our knowledge of others and ourselves is superficial; to a great extent, our so-called radicalism is nothing more than the pulling of strings [...]. However, we can still help our children, our grandchildren. To me, this seems to be our only task. And by God, it's not a small one!⁵²

In listing the properties that adults leave behind as they enter adulthood, Lundgren indirectly articulated his image of the child and childhood: children are freer, they see things more clearly, they have fewer prejudices, and so on.

Several authors agreed with Lundgren's argument about it being the responsibility of the state to guarantee that every child has the opportunity to read good picture books. Inger and Lasse Sandberg, for example, identified children as a minority

group and claimed that the Swedish welfare state had to defend their »interests and demands«. At the same time, they wanted to make politicians aware that they can no longer override the rights of the child: »even if our politicians might seem uninterested in cultural politics, they have to recognize that our children are the adults of tomorrow. After all, the voting age is for some strange reason considered more important than the age range during which you are a small child.«⁵³

The debate about the child's right to picture books funded by the welfare state is not only about the child's right to read aesthetically high quality books. Of equal importance is the connection between the child's right to art and literature, as well as information, knowledge and understanding, and the question of how children's books can contribute to the good society, i.e., to the Swedish welfare state. That this is the case becomes clear when Lundgren's own publisher, Carl Hafström, entered the debate and asserted that it is not only the privileged child who should be given a chance to read good Swedish picture books. It is a right that belongs to all the Swedish children. In this way, picture books »really are going to prompt the development of the good society that Max Lundgren and many others dream of at this point.«⁵⁴ Thus, even if children's writers and publishers of children's literature evidently believed that they were speaking for children as a minority group, and maintained that they were defending the rights of the child, at the same time it seems like they supported a specific political (and leftist) version of children's books, childhood and social progress.

— THE FAIRY TALE OF A RIGHTS-BEARING CHILD —

It is very likely that »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro« sets the tone for Lundgren's own demand for state-funded picture books. This book, published by Bonnier, the publishing house where the above-mentioned Carl Hafström was both publisher and head of the children's books department, can thus be viewed as an example of what Lundgren and Hafström meant when they highlighted the importance of good picture books for all the children of the Swedish welfare state. Consequently it is interesting to investigate in what way the book expands upon the idea of a political children's book, and how it construes children as rights-bearing citizens and elaborates upon a specific conception of children and childhood.

The cover of Lundgren and Hald's picture book portrays the main character in profile with an idyllic Swedish landscape unfolding in the background (Pictures 1 & 2). The landscape includes traditional half-timbered houses from the south of Sweden. A country road curves up and around from the bottom of the cover, where Lotta is positioned, through the little

settlement where some small houses are located. The pastoral and almost pre-modern utopia presented on the cover stands in a stark contrast to the content of the book, which deals with global politics and questions concerning war, famine and pollution portrayed using a radical aesthetics (Pictures 3 & 4). I have already mentioned that the title of the book signals a genre that breaks with the political conception of children's books, along with the attendant call that Scandinavian critics and writers made at the time for realism and a non-idyllic portrayal of the world. The title and the front cover thus situate the realism of the political children's book in an ironic light. It is as if the book cover says: let the child have a childhood with fantasy and comfort even though this book shows the reader a world full of conflicts. Perhaps one could say that it declares that every child has a right to a special childhood and that children don't belong to the world of grown ups that is falling apart.⁵⁵

The narrative in Lundgren and Hald's fairy tale about Lotta features a succession of conflicting motifs. The local is juxtaposed with the global; the pre-modern pastoral landscape with the decay of modern society; the brave and innocent child with the gutless and degenerate adult; the fantasy of fairy tales with the realism of political children's books, and so on. Taken together, it seems like these differences embody the two different discourses on childhood that we have already identified in the debate about children's books and their purpose at the time: the vision of the romantic child on one hand and the vision of the knowing child on the other. But as we shall see, the picture book does not exclude one of these concepts of the child in favour of the other. Instead, it blends them in a specific way.

»The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro« begins with the narrator telling the reader that our sun is just one of many thousands of suns, and the earth is only one among millions of planets. This cosmic viewpoint is mirrored in the first of Fibben Hald's illustrations inside the book, depicting the globe with disproportionately large and stereotyped representations of many different peoples: North Africans, Russians, Hispanics, Inuits, Swedes, Chinese, Americans, Arabs and so on. The attentive reader may notice that the book cover has already established a tension between the local, global, and cosmic in a distinct way (Picture 1). It portrays Lotta in her rural setting and thus makes the local both a starting point and an entrance into the first spread portraying the world from a distance. But this tension is also established by the imaginary rip in the illustration at the top of the front cover. The »torn« image »reveals« how the stars and planets hide behind the framed picture of Lotta standing in the midst of a pastoral and idyllic topography. At the same time this is a metafictional device that

exposes the picture book as an artefact, that is, as an artistic product and a fairy tale. The metafictional rip and frame can be said to signal to the reader that she is being addressed as an equal.⁵⁶ Hald's use of metafictional devices invites child and adult readers alike to ponder over his or her own situation in the world, not only in relation to other countries and people on the planet, but also in relation to what can be called the existential questions of life, death and eternity. This invitation corresponds to the idea of a rights-bearing child and the redefinition of the hierarchic relationship between the writer and reader in traditional children's literature. In general, metafictional books for children can be said to conspicuously deconstruct the essential didacticism of the book as a source of authority and law, and provide the reading child with the power and the right to participate.⁵⁷

The narrator in »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dössjöbro« reveals that God wants to move the sun away from earth so that it can shine on other worlds. It is this impending change that constitutes the main conflict and the threat that Lotta is due to encounter and overcome. The narrator explains that no one else is willing to make the voyage to God in order to persuade him against this intervention. Lotta is thus empowered with a symbolic right to question the final and highest authority and at the same time inspired to voice her own view of things.

The reader soon finds out that Lotta is a girl who speaks for children's rights and who wants them to prevail in the world. When no one else volunteers to travel to God she begins her quest for justice by writing a letter to the United Nations. In her letter, she tells political leaders about herself and proclaims that it is unfair to move the sun, arguing that she can persuade God not to do so. Her letter is reproduced on the back cover of the book and thus stands as an example of what child readers can do if they experience an unjust situation (Picture 2). This suggests that child readers, even before opening the book, are addressed as political subjects with participation rights and valuable voices of their own. Using the vocabulary later included in the 12th article of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the letter enhances the idea that children have the right express their opinion on things that directly relate to them and that adults should listen. After reading Lundgren and Hald's picture book, written 20 years before the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations could well be said to come across as an upholder of human rights to which children too can appeal.

However, after writing to the United Nations, Lotta goes on a nocturnal adventure, during which she seems to be asleep. In this way, the picture book makes use of a traditional children's book motif similar to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963).

But Lotta's voyage-while-asleep is not first and foremost a celebration of children's imagination and playfulness. Along with the fairytalelike challenge, the story contains a political and moral dimension that has a clear message for its readers.

The reason for God wanting to move the sun to another planet is that the humans on earth do not deserve it, as they neither take care of each other nor the earth that they have inherited. The adults make war, pollute the environment, and unjustly oppress one another. The religious motif in the book is very ambiguous, and God can be interpreted as an embodiment of the rights of man and the rights of earth. But he also seems to have the ability to remove these rights whenever he wishes. A secular interpretation of the religious theme could be that humans themselves have violated the rights of man and nature and thus destroyed their own rights. Lotta's trip to God, and the request for sunlight, can thus be seen as a demand for the rights that had been embezzled by adults. Fibben Hald's pictures connect the light of the sun with the child's right to survive and develop in healthy surroundings. The sun generates a metaphoric meaning that is associated not only with brightness and warmth, but also with children's happiness, wellbeing and hopes for the future. The *absence* of the sun, on the other hand, is a motif that the reader most probably associates with images of war, poverty and death in Hald's dark representation of the degenerate civilization of adults. Hald's gloomy pictures of humanity are situated side-by-side with much brighter ones, just as the adults stand side-by-side with children. Hald's use of different techniques in »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro« is both experimental and innovative and can thus be said to make way for social and aesthetic transformation in the sense described by Kimberly Reynolds.⁵⁸

Dösjöbro, or Dösjebro as it is called nowadays, is a small village in the south of Sweden, where approximately 400 persons lived in the late 1960s. In the fairy tale of Lotta, it is the contrast between this rural reality and the horrors and injustice permeating the rest of the world that creates the book's political momentum. The way in which the adult world is portrayed gradually exposes the child reader to political problems that humanity has yet to address. But the picture book also depicts *how* the surrounding world becomes visible for the small child. As mentioned earlier, many critics of children's literature identified TV as the prime reason for the changed social conditions that children experienced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In a similar way, the text and images in Lundgren and Hald's picture book performs children's rights in close dialogue with the images of war and mass starvation seen on TV. When Lotta enters the home of God to persuade him not to remove the sun, he shows her through a telescope how humans behave towards each other. The manner in which

God's telescope mediates the knowledge of global injustice and suffering to Lotta, as well as to the reading child, has certain similarities with another medium:

— – Yes. Now I remember, God said. And now I have decided that the sun shall be moved.

– It is this I want to protest against, said Lotta. I find it very unfair.

– So, you really think so, God said. Let's have a look at the earth for a while.

And God picked up a huge telescope and leaned out of the window, and Lotta looked over his shoulder through the telescope. The green earth was located far below. Then God turned a knob, and Lotta could see a crowd of people.

It seemed like a large anthill. And everybody had such strange faces. Thousands of them were marching with rifles on their shoulders. Thousands were fighting each other. In every house there was a clatter and a hustle. Everywhere there was an awful noise, which you could still hear, way up high in God's castle. [- - -] She saw thousands of children starving. She saw children calling for their parents. She saw children sitting in scarce sunlight with meagre faces and eyes that said: Take us away from here to another place!⁵⁹

God's telescope, and Hald's large illustrations in the picture book, make it possible for Lotta, and for the reader, to see what is happening in different places around the world. It is an image that is analogous to the television news reports about troubles and suffering around the world. This analogy is enhanced by the narrator, who explains that God »turned a knob« when he wanted to make the horrors on earth visible (with old analogue television sets, you had to turn a knob to change channel). This changing of the channel shows children suffering and, at the same time, prompts a call for change. The children are starving, without parents and deprived of sun, and hence the telescope depicts a fallen world very different from Lotta's, a child who enjoys the protection of her family. At the same time, it is important to note that the picture book indirectly characterizes the suffering children as rights-bearers in a very concrete way. It is Lotta, as well as the readers of the picture book, who are addressed in their outcry, that is, the call for what Hannah Arendt once termed a right to human rights: »Take us away from here to another place!«⁶⁰

The sequential representations of human misery in Lundgren and Hald's picture book suggest that the narrative has a loose kind of exemplum structure. This means that God shows Lotta examples of despair from across the world to illustrate his point, and refute her assertion that he must let the sun

continue to shine over the human race. With her newfound knowledge about the injustice of the prevailing circumstances outside Dössjöbro, Lotta embodies the concept of the knowing child.

Children's literature is filled with human rights scenarios. These scenarios transmit ideas about the rights of children in different ways, and many children's books of the 20th century explicitly oppose resistance among adults to the idea that children have something important to say.⁶¹ »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dössjöbro« can be viewed as a statement of children's right to participate in the community, and thus count as true members of society. This becomes clear from the letter that Lotta writes to the UN, but also from Lotta being given the opportunity to express her views on matters that affect her and her friends. When doing so, she gives voice to a counter image that articulates her experience of living and being a child in the world. While God reveals the violence and suffering in the world, Lotta responds by pointing God's telescope towards the children in Dössjöbro:

— - This is where I live, said Lotta. This is my school. The bell has recently rung out and the children walk on the country road in the sunshine. Can you see it? Can you sense the smell from the meadows? Look at the children's faces! And they don't ponder the sunshine much. It simply happens and makes you joyful. There is Kalle eating an orange, and oranges need sun to grow red.⁶²

Given that Lundgren took into consideration the readers of his picture books being both adults and children, this passage seems to encourage children's participation at the same time as attempting to convince adults that children are worth listening to. When Lotta expresses herself with the assistance of the telescope, she enacts the value of child participation and speaks for children as a minority group rather than for the adults. She displays her world, a world that turns out to be something close to a pre-modern pastoral, a rural landscape filled with pleasant smells and tender sunshine. In her world, »sunshine« is exceedingly present as made evident not only by Lundgren's text but also Hald's illustrations (Pictures 5 & 6). These illustrations depict a world of sunshine as a world of children and stand in striking contrast to the dark images of soldiers, suffering and poverty that God shared through his telescope. – If you are going to judge the human race, you also have to regard the positive side, Lotta argues, and points God's telescope towards the children. At the same time, she blames the adult world for the prevalence of erroneousness and injustice. It is the adults who »make war«, »oppress« and »destroy«.



Image 5. Images of children and childhood in »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro«.

The story about Lotta, who leaves earth in order to tell God how »horribly unfair« it is to move the sun, emphasizes a rights discourse and the child as a rights-bearer. Which, for example, are the right or wrong actions, in relation to mother earth and the children who are going to inherit the earth? However, the religious motif of a God who wants to punish humans for their mischievous actions can be read on at least two levels. On the one hand, it is the manifestation of a higher order of justice issuing a harsh judgment upon earth and its inhabitants. On the other, removing the sun can be interpreted as the logical consequence of not taking care of the world. In Hald's pictures, the pollution and the dust of war simply make the sun disappear, leaving an image of a dark and gloomy world (Pictures 3 & 4). At the same time, the religious motif encapsulates what can be regarded as a childlike way of encountering unfairness: turning to the concept of God as the highest instance of justice. But it also signals that the child has at her disposal what can be considered a romantic connection to true righteousness, something that seems to be lacking in the adult world.



Image 6. The sun is shining over the world in »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro«.

— CONCLUSION: TO DEFEND THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD —

Considering the historical context, it is not surprising that the difference between being an adult and being a child is a central theme in »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro«. In many ways, Lotta embodies what can be called the voice and participation rights of the child, and does so in a rather adult way. Thus the boundary between adults and children seems to some extent to wither away. Lotta turns into a knowing child when she becomes aware, just as an adult might, of the horrors and suffering occurring all over the world. At the same time, Lotta as a child is completely different from the adults. She is not already ruined by the iniquities of the modern world and she can still judge right from wrong. This becomes apparent when Lotta's quest for justice is deemed to be merely a result of adults having a bad conscience, an affliction from which children do not suffer:

— Why didn't the humans send an adult? God asked.
 They didn't dare.
 Why not?
 I guess they thought you were rash and priggish.
 I am righteous, God said. And now perhaps you understand why no adult dared to come.⁶³

The grown ups in »The Fairy tale of Lotta From Dösjöbro« have forfeited their right to sunshine and life. But if the adults are denied rights, then from God's perspective, this is because they have become inhuman and turned against each other. Lundgren and Hald's picture book thus seems to tell its readers, children and adults alike, that if only humanity could retain its human dignity, it could keep the shining sun as well. This narrative message is especially evident by the end of the book, which in fact underlines the fundamental difference between children and adults.

It is »for the children's sake« that God must let the earth keep the sun. And when God asks Lotta if she also is going to grow up and err like an adult, she answers »never«. The image of the knowing child thus interacts with a romantic celebration of the child. In this regard, the book defends the rights of the child at the expense of the rights of adults, and consequently inverts the traditional relationship between children and adults. Or in God's own words:

— The earth is permitted to keep the sun for twenty years from now. And if at that point in time Lotta Bergström from Dösjöbro is still like a child, then I believe even this sad creation to be similar to what I once wanted it to be. And the sun shall shine on the humans as long as I am. And I am forever.

— But if the humans are two: the child and the adult, and Lotta has lost all that she is now, which is glowing from my greatest and most brilliant suns, and from the greatest and most beautiful that I have created, if she has lost all this, then the sun shall be moved to another world that needs it more.⁶⁴

The story about children as rights-bearers thus departs from many traditional children's books, as it construes children as knowing, and at the same time declares that the adult must remain like a child. Consequently the adult is no longer to be understood as a norm for the righteous and just. At the same time, this motif can be set against the idea that every child has the right to be a child, and that a child should never be forced to grow up. From an international perspective, the case of Peter Pan is one of the most famous and most debated literary characters in this category.⁶⁵ In the Nordic countries, however, the most noteworthy example of a girl who does not want to grow up is Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking. Pippi refuses to grow up and she even persuades her friends, Tommy and Annika, to eat a small pea-like pill, so that they never have to leave childhood and turn into adults.⁶⁶

Lotta from Dösjöbro can be compared to the red head girls

that populate children's literature, from Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) to Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* (1945). Indeed, she is described as a Tomboy somewhat similar to Anne and Pippi. The narrator remarks: »She was eleven years old, with freckles, red hair and audacious like a boy.«⁶⁷ Freckles are associated with childhood, but also with living an active life outdoors in the sunshine, a fact that relates in a special way to the main theme of the book, that is, God's threat to move the sun. Accordingly, it can be argued that Anne as well as Pippi and Lotta embody the idea that children and childhood have a special value, and that every child has the right to a healthy childhood. In contrast to both Anne and Pippi, however, Lundgren and Hald's literary character Lotta defends the right of the child on a political level. As Hald's final illustration in »The Fairy tale of Lotta from Dösjöbro« seems to indicate by portraying Lotta's world as a small winding country road, laid out in gentle sunlight and heading towards the horizon, the future is with the children and in the romantic vision of childhood, not in the world of adults (Pictures 5 & 6). The picture book thus not only construes children and childhood as political, it also includes a specifically romantic way of thinking and performing children's rights in the modern welfare state. —■

■ — ENDNOTES —

- 1 Lena Kåreland: *Inga gåbortsföremål: lekfull litteratur och vidgad kulturdebatt i 1960- och 70-talens Sverige* (Göteborg, 2009), 33.
- 2 Martin Wiklund disusses the growing critique of the Swedish welfare state around '68 in *I det modernas landskap: Historisk orientering och kritiska berättelser om det moderna Sverige mellan 1960 och 1990*, diss. (Stockholm/Stehag, 2006), 162.
- 3 Taken from Gunila Ambjörnsson's speech at the third Nordic Youth Literature Conference. Quoted after Lena Kjersén Edman: *I ungdomsrevoltens tid: svensk ungdomsbok och dess mottagande åren kring 1968*, diss. (Umeå, 1990), 128. Cf. Kåreland: *Inga gåbortsföremål*, 38.
- 4 Torben Weinreich: *Den socialistiske børnebog* (Fredriksberg, 2015), 35f.
- 5 Max Lundgren: »Barnbokens stora problem«, *Skolbiblioteket*, 1968:5, 186.
- 6 Max Lundgren and Fibben Hald: *Sagan om Lotta från Dösjöbro* (Stockholm, 1969). The picture book has no pagination and will be referred to only by title.
- 7 Lena Kjersén Edman: *Fotboll och frihet: Studier i Max Lundgrens författarskap* (Stockholm, 1987), 24f.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 38ff.

9 Max Lundgren: *Omin Hambbe i Slättköping* (Stockholm, 1966) and *Pojken med Guldbyxorna*, (Stockholm, 1967).

10 Lundgren: *Omin Hambbe*, 8f, my translation of the original: »Man skulle kunna tänka sig att Slättköping ligger långt ifrån Afrika, Med det för det inte, det lutar sig mot Afrikas berg och slätter; hit till oss kom bilder på televisionen, det kom tidningsrubriker, svartfeta som en kolgruvara från Billesholm, de kom fotografier, där plötsligt människan steg ut ur bilden, vände sig om i vårvädret i Slättköping och sa: ge oss mänskliga rättigheter.«

11 Nina Christensen: »Childhood Revisited: On the Relationship between Childhood Studies and Children's Literature«, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2003), 231.

12 Kimberley Reynolds: *Radical Children's Literature: Future Visions and Aesthetic Transformations in Juvenile Fiction* (New York, 2007), 17.

13 Helene Brembeck, Barbro Johansson, and Jan Kampmann: »Introduction«, in *Beyond the Competent Child: Exploring Contemporary Childhoods in the Nordic Welfare Societies*, eds. Helene Brembeck, Barbro Johansson, and Jan Kampmann (Frederiksberg, 2004), 7.

14 Olle Widhe: »Inventing Subjectivity and the Rights of the Child«, in *Nordic Childhoods 1700–1960: From Folk Beliefs to Pippi Longstocking*, eds. Reidar Aasgaard, Marcia Bunge, Merethe Roos (New York, 2017).

15 Steven Mintz: *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 77.

16 Cf. Lynn Hunt: *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York and London, 2007), 26–32.

17 Annika Widholm: »Barnlitteraturens betydelse för ungas rättigheter«, in *Barnlitteraturens värden och värderingar*, eds. Sara Kärrholm and Paul Tenngart (Lund, 2012), 39–50. Cf. Jonathan Todres and Sarah Higinbotham: *Human Rights in Children's Literature: Imagination and the Narrative of Law* (Oxford and New York, 2016), 3. See also Lara Saguisag and Matthew B. Prickett, eds: *The Lion and the Unicorn* 40 (2016), a special issue on Children's Rights and Children's Literature, 2.

18 Desmond Manderson: »From Hunger to Love: Myths if the Source, Interpretation, and Constitution of Law in Children's Literature«, *Law and Literature* 15, no.1 (2003), 93; and Todres and Higinbotham *Human Rights in Children's Literature*, 3.

19 Reynolds *Radical Children's Literature*, 1.

20 Max Lundgren: »Hjälp bilderboken!«, *Kvällsposten*, 20 May 1971.

21 Kåreland: *Inga gåbortsföremål*, 11.

22 Cf. Malena Janson: *När bara den bästa TV:n var god*

nog åt barnen: om sjuttioalets svenska barnprogram, Karneval (Stockholm, 2014), 50ff.

23 Lundgren: »Hjälp bilderboken!«, my translation of the original: »att barn är människor«.

24 Sara Kärrholm: »Barnkulturen och det stora slaget om verkligheten: värden och värderingar i tidskriften *Ord & Bild* under 1970-talet«, in *Barnlitteraturens värden och värderingar*, eds. Sara Kärrholm and Paul Tenngart (Lund, 2012), 103–118.

25 Lundgren: »Hjälp bilderboken!«.

26 Kåreland: *Inga gåbortsföremål*, 36. Cf. Tommy Gustafsson: »'Kan verka skrämmande på små barn': Våld, sex och historiebruk i tv-serien *Trälarna*«, *Barnboken* 2012:35, 3.

27 Gunila Ambjörnsson: *Skräpkultur åt barnen* (Stockholm, 1968), 23f, my translation of the original: »i myten om ett barn som är rent och oskyldigt och lever i en annan värld än vår, ett barn som till varje pris måste skyddas därför att det inte förstår och inte tål de vuxnas hårda verklighet.«

28 Kåreland: *Inga gåbortsföremål*, 107. Cf. Ambjörnsson *Skräpkultur åt barnen*.

29 Ambjörnsson: *Skräpkultur åt barnen*, 25f, my translation of the original: »med nyfikenhet och oräddhet beskriver nya områden och nya verkligheter.«

30 Kåreland: *Inga gåbortsföremål*, 31f.

31 Ingrid Nettervik: *I barnbokens värld*, (Malmö, 2002), 234f.

32 Olle Widhe: *Dö din hund: Krig, lek och läsning i svensk barnboksutgivning under 200 år* (Lund 2015), 252–269. Cf. Kåreland: *Inga gåbortsföremål*, 18–20.

33 Gunila Ambjörnsson: »Världen tränger sig på... än sen då?«, *Dagens nyheter*, 30 November 1968.

34 Brembeck, Johansson and Kampmann: »Introduction«, 17.

35 Ambjörnsson: *Skräpkultur åt barnen*, 10, my translation of the original: »Det gäller att integrera barnens kultur i de vuxnas. Sedan borde mycket följa av sig självt.«

36 Kristin Stjärne: »Sanning i vuxenböcker är förförelse i sagan. Men verkligheten tränger in i sagan«, *Arbetet*, 20 November 1973, my translation of the original: »Men detta som vi vuxna talat om i årtal – och det som de flesta ungar vet en hel del om från TV och andra massmedia – blev alltså plötsligt kontroversiellt i barnböcker. För där ser av hävd annorlunda ut. Vietnam får inte nämnas, godsägaren brukar ju vara de fattigas vän och välgörare och ska det vara miljövård så ska det vara barn som planterar blommor i asfaltsdjungeln eller städar upp i skogen.«

37 Paul Duncum: »Deconstructing Media Images of Post Modern Childhood«, in *Real-World Readings in Art Education*, eds. Dennis Fehr, Kris Fehr, and Karen Keifer-Boyd (New York and London, 2000), 31. Cf. Anne Higonnet: *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London,

1998), 12. In other cases, the children in children's books of the 1960s and 70s seem to know about feelings that adults traditionally tried to hide from them, such as those relating to sexuality for example. Cf. Maria Andersson: »Från stork till spermabank: sexualupplysningslitteratur för barn 1965–2014«, *Samlaren*, 2015:136, 5–6.

38 Widhe: *Dö din hund*, 331ff.

39 Lundgren: »Barnbokens stora problem«, 187, my translation of the original: »Det kommer alltid att finnas människor som anser att man bör undanhålla vissa sanningar för barn. Jag tillhör inte dem, och jag hoppas att deras antal blir allt mindre ju mer vår insikt växer.«

40 Antonia Zilliacus: »Barn och information«, *Huvudstadsbladet*, 13 April 1970.

41 Ibid., my translation of the original: »Barn har rätt att få veta. Och barn har ofta en betydligt sakligare och konsekventare inställning till sin omvärld än vuxna som belastas med tabun och attityder av olika slag.«

42 Ibid., »borde man väl försöka ge barnet något slag av solidaritet och ansvarskänsla så att de kan vara med om att eliminera de orättvisor som nu existerar.«

43 Irmelin Sandman Lilius: »Ständig förändring«, *Nya Argus*, 11 October 1970, 169.

44 Kerstin Stjärne: »Det farliga är undansopat«, *Kvällsposten*, 4 December 1968, my translation of the original: »ett så allmänt och lekfullt sagoplan att det blir till intet förpliktigande.«

45 Lars Olof Franzén: »Varför är det så ont om Alfredson«, *Dagens nyheter*, 23 November 1968.

46 Lundgren: *Omin Hambbe*, 49, my translation of the original: »Förstår ni inte att de är sånt här som händer i Afrika, sa vår lärare, att de vita ger sig på dom färgade.../ –Den ende vite här är läraren, sa Gustav-Sixten./ De såg på varandra./ –Om det ska vara på det här sättet, sa Gustav-Sixten efter en stund, så är det bäst att en annan går iväg och demonstrerar för mänskliga rättigheter.«

47 Lundgren: *Sagan om Lotta från Dösjöbro*, my translation of the original: »Det finns en mängd minoriteter i det här landet. Det har börjat bli en god tradition att vi så gott vi förmår värnar om dessa. Vi har många minoriteter. En av dem är barnen. Det behövs folk som talar i deras sak.«

48 Widhe: *Dö din hund*, 98ff.

49 Lennart Hellsing: *Tankar om barnlitteraturen* (Stockholm, 1999 [1963]), 27.

50 Tommy Lundström: »Child Protection, Voluntary Organizations, and the Public Sector in Sweden«, *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 2001:4, 358f.

51 Lundgren: »Hjälp bilderboken!«.

52 Ibid., my translation of the original: »I grunden är jag en ganska pessimistisk människa; jag tror till exempel, att du och jag, vi som kallar oss vuxna, redan är förlorade. Förlorade på så sätt att vi inte har den frihet som vi tror att vi äger, vi är inte tillräckligt självständiga, vi ser inte klart, vi har mängder av fördomar, som då och då dyker upp som svarta troll i våra ögon och munnar, våra kunskaper om oss själva och om andra är ytliga, till en del är vår så kallade radikalism bara ryck i trådar [...] däremot kan vi fortfarande hjälpa våra barn, våra barnbarn. Det tycks mig som om det är vår enda uppgift. Och den är vid gud inte så liten!«

53 Inger och Lasse Sandberg: »Glättat strunt bara ökar«, *Kvällsposten*, 23 May 1971, my translation of the original: »hur ointresserade än våra politiker verkar vara av kulturpolitik måste dom väl ändå inse att våra barn är morgondagens vuxna. Eftersom nu rösträttsåldern av någon egendomlig anledning anses mer värd än småbarnsåldern.«

54 Carl Hafström: »Bilderboken måste nå fler«, *Kvällsposten*, 28 May 1971, my translation of the original: »så att den verkligen kommer att betyda allt det goda för samhällets utveckling som Max Lundgren och vid det här laget säkert många med honom drömmer om.«

55 Lundgren and Hald were not alone in upholding the fantasy of the fairytale. It is possible to discern a sort of counter movement in the Nordic countries in the early 1970s, which maintained that social awareness did not necessarily stand in conflict with the fairytale. The movement sought to defend the fairytale from what it believed to be the threat of social realism in children's culture. Britt Ågren: »Hennes sagor handlar om en hård verklighet«, *Dagens Nyheter*, 18 October 1970 (an interview with Irmelin Sandman Lilius); see too Judith Hollander and Lotta Silfverhielm: »Barnkulturen«, *Aftonbladet*, 6 June 1970.

56 For a discussion of asymmetries between the book and its reader, see for example Linda Hutcheon: *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (New York and London 1980 [1984]), xii and 7. Cf. my thesis *Främlingskap: Etik och form i Willy Kyrklunds tidiga prosa* (Göteborg 2005), 130.

57 Todres and Higinbotham *Human Rights in Children's Literature*, 41–42.

58 Reynolds: *Radical Children's Literature*, 17f. For a comment on Fibben Hald's use of different styles and techniques, see Ulla Forsén, »Fibben Hald«, in *Författare & illustratörer för barn och ungdom. Porträtt på svenska och utländska nutida författare och illustratörer* (Lund 1998), 175.

59 Lundgren and Hald: *Sagan om Lotta från Dösjöbro*, my translation of the original: »–Ja. Nu minns jag sa Gud. Och nu har jag bestämt att solen ska flyttas./ –Det är det jag vill klaga över, sa Lotta. Det är hemskt orättvist, tycker jag./ –Såå. Du tycker det, sa Gud. Nu ska vi se på jorden ett slag./ Och Gud tog

fram en väldig kikare och lutade sej ut genom fönstret, och Lotta tittade över axeln på honom genom kikaren. Långt därnere låg den gröna jorden. Så skruvade Gud på en knapp, och Lotta så ett vimmel av människor./ Det var som en väldig myrstack. Och alla människor hade så konstiga ansikten. Tusentals marscherade med gevär på axlarna. Tusentals slogs med varandra. I varje hus var det liv och bråk. Överallt var det ett förfärligt oväsen, som hördes ända hit upp till Guds slott. [-] Hon såg tusentals barn som svalt. Hon såg barn som ropade efter sina föräldrar. Hon såg barn sitta i ett snålt solsken med magra ansikten och ögon som sa: Ta oss härifrån till ett annat ställe!«

60 James D. Ingram, »What is a 'Right to Have Rights'? Three Images of the Politics of Human Rights«, *American Political Science Review* 201, no. 4 (2008), 401–416.

61 Todres and Higinbotham: *Human Rights in Children's Literature*, 41.

62 Lundgren and Hald: *Sagan om Lotta från Dösjöbro*, my translation of the original »Här bor jag, sa Lotta. Där är skolan. Det har just ringt ut och barnen går på landsvägen mitt i solskenet. Ser du? Känner du hur det doftar från fälten? Se på barnens ansikten! Och de tänker inte så mycket på solskenet. Det bara finns där och man blir glad. Där är Kalle som äter en apelsin, och apelsiner behöver sol för att bli röda.«

63 Lundgren and Hald: *Sagan om Lotta från Dösjöbro*, my translation of the original: »Varför sände inte människorna en vuxen? Frågade Gud./ Dom vågade inte./ Varför inte det?/ Dom tyckte väl att du var sträng och petig./ Jag är rättvis, sa Gud. Och nu förstår du kanske varför ingen vuxen vågade komma?«

64 Ibid., my translation of the original: »Jorden får behålla solen i tjugo år framåt. Då ska jag se i kikaren igen. Och är Lotta Bergström från Dösjöbro fortfarande som ett barn, då ska jag tro att till och med denna sorgliga skapelse en gång kan likna det jag ville med universum. Och solen ska lysa på människorna så länge jag finns. Och jag finns alltid./ Men är det så att människorna är två: barnet och den vuxne, att Lotta har mist allt det, som nu finns hos henne, som nu finns hos henne, som glimtar från mina största och mest lysande solar och av det största och skönast jag skapat, om hon har mist allt detta, då ska solen flyttas till en annan värld, som bättre behöver den.«

65 Jacqueline Rose: *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London, 1994).

66 Astrid Lindgren: *Pippi in the South Seas*, translated by Marianne Turner, illustrated by Tony Ross (Oxford and New York, 2012), 109.

67 Lundgren and Hald: *Sagan om Lotta från Dösjöbro*, my translation of the original »Hon var elva år, fräknig, rödhårig och morsk som en pojke.«