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*Inlagans typografi:* Anders Svedin

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vitet. Men om medier, med Marshall McLuhan, är proteser – vilket Gardfors skriver under på vid några tillfällen – kommer frågan om subjektivitet och representation att ställas på sin spets. Exakt vad innebär denna ontologiska distinktion i ett sammanhang där relationen mellan medier och materialitet, verklighet och representation problematiseras radikalt? Denna fråga inställer sig delvis, skulle jag hävda, mot bakgrund av att mediebegreppet aldrig utreds ordentligt. Om McLuhans tanke hade förts vidare, som den har gjorts på andra håll, bortom den protetiska logik som förutsätter ett redan existerande subjekt, för att i stället bearbetas i termer av ekologier och *assemblage* av agenser och krafter hade kanske analysen av ”subjektiviteter” i Hodells verk komplexifierats och fått ytterligare en dimension. Tudelningen mellan subjekt och representation framstår som jämförelsevis statisk och begränsande. Vad hade hänt om det hodellska verket hade beskrivits och analyserats som en *medieekologi*?

Jag har haft ytterligare frågor kring *Åke Hodell – Art and Writing in the Neo-Avant-Garde*. Till exempel kring de litteratur- och konsthistoriska skrivningarna – det är märkligt att sextiotalets *found poetry* inte nämns – eller kring detaljer i diskussioner av sådant som skrivande, information och ”radikal formalism” (Craig Dworkin). Dessutom skiftar kvaliteten på kapitlen litet (det fjärde är inte lika starkt som de övriga). Men dessa funderingar såväl som de kritiska frågor som ställts ovan vittnar främst om en sak: hur rik på perspektiv, idéer och betydelser Gardfors studie är. Utan tvekan är det en mycket stark och tankeväckande avhandling, som på ett nyanserat, teoretiskt drivet och genomreflekerat sätt argumenterar för sin sak. Dessutom rymmer den en del fynd ur arkivet, vilka skapar extra resonans.

Och slutligen – inte minst viktigt är att Gardfors öppnar Hodells verk för en förståelse som inte bara eller främst bygger på den hodellska biografien och självbilden. Med *Åke Hodell – Art and Writing in the Neo-Avant-Garde* har en färgstark och mångformig pusselbit lagts i den svenska litteratur- och konsthistorieskrivningen. Den kompletterar även – och därför är det viktigt att den är skriven på engelska – den internationella berättelsen om avantgardets tradition under 1900-talet. Dit hör tveklöst både Hodell och den svenska konkreta poesin.

Jesper Olsson

Kelly Hübben, *A Genre of Animal Hanky-panky? Animal Representations, Anthropomorphism, and Interspecies Relations in The Little Golden Books*. Institutionen för kultur och estetik, Stockholms universitet. Stockholm 2017.

How should the success of the marketing of stories to children be judged? The numbers alone of the world's most popular children's book series are staggering. Within four months of their initial release, the Little Golden Books were in their third printing, with one-and-a-half million total copies in print. Today the series is still going strong, featuring over 1,200 titles and two billion copies in print. Twelve of the most popular titles have never gone out of print. While histories of the Little Golden Books' success sharply focus on the cleverly calculated marketing strategy behind them, the potentially profound and widespread social impact on a highly impressionable population of readers has yet to be accounted for.

Kelly Hübben's thesis pursues an original angle by taking as its focus the prominent role of non-human animals in this incredibly popular, international, and lucrative children's picture book series. Her central concern is to track how a selection of titles represent nonhuman animals and interspecies relations with an eye to understanding how the stories and images that the works convey influence young readers in their understanding of their own and other species' places in our world. At the heart of the matter is the question of how children might enlist critical literacy mechanisms in the struggle to build empathy for the lives of animals, an endeavor that has only intensified throughout the life of the Little Golden Books. The thesis thus contributes to robust and growing bodies of research that demonstrate how picture books serve important socializing functions for young children and that consider how representations of human-animal relations become volatile sites where dominant ideologies of social difference can be reinforced as well as challenged.

Hübben begins with a primal scene familiar to those of us who grew up with the Little Golden Books in our homes. She takes readers back to her own fond childhood memories of reading one of the earliest and most popular Little Golden Book titles, *Poes Pinkie*, a 1953 translation by legendary Dutch children's author Annie M.G. Schmidt of Kathryn Jackson's 1949 classic, *Katie the Kitten*. Her anecdotal experience captures much of what

makes the series so memorable: its enlistment of high-quality artists and authors, its engaging animal characters, its vivid and lush illustrations, and, perhaps most important of all, the concrete features that make these picture books so distinctive. Her recollections remind readers of how children encounter more than stories in their pages: “The [...] Little Golden Books [are ...] material objects: the cardboard covers, the golden spines through which you could feel the staples, the structure and smell of the paper all contributed to the unique Golden Book experience” (6).

Growing up with Little Golden Books entails sharing them with relatives and friends. As adults we buy and read them to still more children, joining millions of people in a marketing phenomenon that has insinuated itself deeply into the cultures of the industrialized world by the early twenty-first century. As Hübben’s sketch history of the series clarifies, none of this is accidental.

First offered to the public in 1942 at twenty-five cents per copy—nearly ten times cheaper than the average picture book at the time—the Little Golden Books moved owning picture books from a rare luxury to an ordinary mainstay of bourgeois youth. Designed on an economy of scale, titles turned a tidy profit only after they sold in the hundreds of thousands of copies, so they could easily have gone out of print if they were not so carefully introduced to the right audience. An even bolder aspect of the Little Golden Books’ marketing plan was that bookstores with their holiday shoppers were not their target venue. Initially offered instead in nontraditional book-retail sites like department stores and supermarkets—places specifically chosen for their being frequented by parents of young children—they have been continuously stocked as year-round goods ever since.

From their early wartime days, the Little Golden Books attracted an international crew of talented writers and illustrators, including many of the top names at the height of their careers, which also helps to explain their lasting appeal in translation from originals in English. Colorful and otherwise eye-catching, their uniform design made them instantly recognizable, appealing as collectables, and eventually—perhaps the greatest sign of their cultural success—ripe for parody. Despite their high cultural impact, Hübben notes, they have received comparatively “little critical or academic attention” (11–12), which makes them an ideal subject for her thesis. Because they were primarily conceived as

“merchandise books,” they profoundly challenged assumptions about what it means to read a “product in book form [...], that is,] something that is intended not to inform or instruct, or even to amuse, but [strictly] to sell” (42). The primacy of their commodity status prompts a larger question: what is the value of non-didactic children’s reading material? Hübben seems to say that, while the Little Golden Books are not overtly educational, they do teach more than initially meets the eye.

The success of Little Golden Books is not without controversy. Librarians instantly questioned their educational value for beginning readers. Objections centered on the primacy of images at the expense of stories. Hübben clarifies: “[N]o matter how charming the story, the images are what ultimately establishes their lasting impression. The playful qualities that are so characteristic of the illustrations captivate young imaginations and never let go” (6). She goes on to explain that many of their stories were recycled from other media forms like movies and television series, deeply entangling the Little Golden Books in advertising and other forces working to transform children into a niche population of consumers through the power of visual media.

Less predictably, Hübben posits, the visual dimension also enables animals to become pivotal figures in the life of the series. Fictional animal characters are central to perennial bestsellers like *Katie the Kitten* and *The Poky Little Puppy*. Their frequent lack of originality—rather, their efficiency in recycling or remediating stories and characters “from other picture books, novels, films, [even ...] television” (13)—virtually ensured a Little Golden Book devoted to each popular animal celebrity who had garnered a following among children. Situating the series amid discussions of the socializing role of anthropomorphized animal representations in early childhood psychology, Hübben maps several dimensions through which Little Golden Books realize potentials to shape not only human but also nonhuman lives.

The emergence of human-animal studies as an interdisciplinary academic subject in recent decades enables Hübben to apply the insights of especially literary scholars and art historians to the question of what animals are doing in the Little Golden Books, and to what effects. As Hübben recognizes, “[i]t is perhaps a truism that animals are ubiquitous in children’s books,” yet scholars in the past all too often have focused strictly on their

childish behaviors, childlike looks, escapist fantasies, moral values—in short, “the humanity of these characters” (6)—at the expense of elaborating why and how they are deliberately cast as nonhuman animals. A major obstacle to this approach within literary studies has been the focus on the formal ideals of metaphor, which enables animals to be read all too conveniently as stand-ins for humans. Hübben joins a fast-growing group of literary animal studies scholars who seek to identify alternate narrative potentials and reading practices in order to address how animals come to be seen as actors in their own right, having their own stories, largely through integrations with visual media.

The thesis also directly addresses a related problem plaguing the Little Golden Books’ animal representations, namely, the expectation that there should be no political controversies in children’s picture books. Questions of animal welfare and rights might be seen by some to be inimical to a genre that historically has lent itself to promoting human-centered ways of thinking. For precisely this reason, however, animals in the Little Golden Books provide blunt illustrations of how species differences and hierarchies are visually and narratively constructed, and so emerge as important sites for studying what Cary Wolfe argues in *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* is the production of the foundational albeit also most repressed social difference, made manifest in the discourse of speciesism. Hübben explains:

Reading these books critically means that we have to ask ourselves questions such as: to what extent are animals like us? How does our own animality inform our responses to other animals—fictional and real? How does our empathy for animals in culture affect our behavior towards animals in nature or society? (27)

At a metaphorical level, the struggles of characters with their “animal urges” mirror those of young children, an audience that “does not yet qualify as fully human either” in Eurowestern history (28). But their very different journeys to extend empathy to other animal characters are also a stock formula whereby the books’ model behaviors coded as good or bad. The uniquely interspecies politics become particularly apparent when the stories thematize training, domesticating, hunting, killing, and eating other animals. The selection of Little Golden Books at the center of the thesis demon-

strate that they do all this with startling frequency as well as intensity in the service of political agendas that change radically across the decades.

These political potentials pivot on a double standard that is often at work in the texts, a dynamic through which children are both encouraged to feel for animal characters while at the same time to accept ethically dubious norms through which the same animals are systematically dominated, exploited, and killed for human convenience. Hübben asks, “When young readers pick up on these complexities—and they do—how can they not be confused?” (10). Clarifying exactly what the books say is important to understanding what young readers can get from reading Little Golden Books.

Through the method of close reading, the thesis identifies the formal properties through which these picture books as a whole complicate the very ideologies that they ostensibly promote. Rather than tracking the intentions of their producers or the reactions of readers, the thesis examines a selection of the books themselves in order to identify how they represent “diverse interspecies interactions and relationships” (11). Moreover, she argues, the insights that ensue apply far beyond the scholarly realm, providing a foundation for adults to instill critical-reading practices in children from their earliest experiences with Little Golden Books.

Following the introduction, the thesis is structured by three pairings of case studies. The first chapter focuses on the Little Golden Books’ depictions of animals welcomed into middle-class households in narratives of pet-keeping. Several Little Golden Book dog stories ground the initial case study, and appear to be organized by a logic of domination, quietly imposing masculinist ideals by enforcing male-female, human-animal, and adult-child hierarchical dualisms. An intriguing contrast emerges through analysis of their feline counterparts in the second case study, in stories that instead foreground negotiations of familial relations that include quite different potentials for reciprocity, if not equality. Pet-keeping therefore highlights domestication as a site of converging social dynamics, shaped through the dialectic foregrounded by Yi-fu Tuan in *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets*.

The next chapter traces the intertwined developments of discourses of domestication, taming, and wildness through stories of animals transitioning between relationships with humans, including fe-

ral-cum-working or pet horses as well as wild-cum-entertainment-industry animals. Quite differently from the first two case studies, horse stories in the third case study “are permeated by the idea that a true, authentic interspecies understanding can be more readily achieved by a child than an adult” (137). The home in books about children’s taming of horses more blatantly signals a transitional space or contact zone, seemingly more effectively for the male rather than the female children that they depict. A bit harder to characterize, the fourth case study compares stories of animals in circuses, television shows, and propaganda campaigns, the latter two starting from the lives of historical figures enlisted in entertainment industries, in order to show how anthropomorphism can be enlisted “to question and even overturn power relations,” perhaps most surprisingly in stories that promote dodgy ideological assumptions about the operations of power (153). For members of subjugated groups, a stark political message emerges: resistance becomes more effective in the public sphere.

The third section then turns to the question of explicit violence committed by and against animals in the Little Golden Books. It features a fifth case study of animals who are represented as consuming others as well as protesting the consumption of themselves, which is where the potentials for critical literacy come to the fore. For a book series focused on selling as many copies as possible, it is intriguing to see consumerism emerging as the focus of its food politics, let alone the privileging of perspectives that articulate ethical concerns, if only because vegans and vegetarians historically have been among the smallest minority populations. Tempering enthusiasm for progressive politics in the Little Golden Books, however, is their long and ongoing history of trading in racist and ethnocentric stereotypes. The last case study offers postcolonial readings of particular Little Golden Books by showing how their tales travel from around the world only to ultimately be used to reinforce Eurowestern imperialist worldviews in which animals naturalize racism and colonialism. What seems more hopeful in Hübben’s analysis is that human and animal politics prove difficult to separate through these case studies.

The thesis concludes with some speculations about anthropomorphism and ethics, and identifies opportunities for further research. What strikes me as most promising is the potential move toward analysis of young readers’ responses to the

stories analyzed throughout, and how they might be guided by critical-literacy questions about them. As a strong thesis should do, it raises more questions than it can answer, and I highlight a few by way of concluding this review.

The focus on the interplay of story and image in animal representations itself has a history. Since literary animal studies began to take shape in the 1980s, they have shifted away from emphasizing Derridean deconstructive analysis—including Margot Norris’s *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* published over a decade before Wolfe’s *Animal Rites*, and Carrie Rohman’s *Stalking the Subject*, published nearly a decade after—and toward what David Herman terms “postclassical narratology,” the study of narrative across literary and less storied forms. Herman’s *Narratology beyond the Human: Storytelling and Animal Life* offers a model for analyzing animal narratives in order to outline what their story worlds make not only in/visible but also im/possible for human, animal, and shared human-animal lives. Hübben’s methodological decision to focus on the texts themselves follows in this trajectory, assuming both the primacy of animal stories and the necessity of taking stock of the special complexity in their combinations of words and images. Still, that begs the question: where might the artists’ or authors’ intentions fit into the larger picture of the Little Golden Books’ social impact?

A related concern is the tendency of the books under discussion to privilege fantasy over realistic elements. Hübben’s introduction outlines a concern largely expressed by early childhood psychologists that anthropomorphic representations of animals in picture books essentially amount to child abuse by preventing children from learning “true facts” (18) about animals. The question then arises: How does approaching the child-reader dynamic as a literary scholar challenge the assumptions of child psychologists? Is anthropocentrism a developmental goal for readers of picture books, or a Eurowestern worldview that permeates the books themselves as cultural constructions? Why is such a question on the radar of a literary scholar, but not necessarily a problem for social scientists? How might these disciplinary perspectives be reconciled?

One obstacle to answering such questions is clarified by Hübben’s history of the Little Golden Books, which emphasizes that their “literary quality [... has been] highly disputed by literary critics and [other] gatekeepers” (43). Again, at the time of their initial publication librarians vehemently

objected to them. Over time, these early critiques only gain more validity as the recycling of racist stories appears to be a growing problem. For instance, Hübben notes, many disturbing elements from the 1948 Little Golden Book version of *Little Black Sambo* have been problematically recycled in 2004's contribution to the series entitled *The Boy and the Tigers*, not least of which is the basic premise that naturalizes harm to brown children through the threat of being eaten by tigers. Even more pervasively, Hübben's examples as a whole would appear to promote sexist and cisheteronormative visions of family life, as demonstrated through patterns in representations of boys versus girls with puppies, kittens, and horses. With such socially retrograde politics, I wonder, why do these books persist?

In Hübben's analysis, the series' concept and target audience together help to explain certain patterns in the Little Golden Books' representations of animals. She identifies their target audience as "preschool children from a middle class background" (13), which prescribes a nuclear family's suburban or urban home as the most popular setting for the books, and therefore small-animal pets like kittens and puppies as the most popular animals. These patterns relate also to the history of moral education in children's literature, which as Katherine Grier has shown in *Pets in America: A History* becomes inextricable from historic changes in perceptions of the educational value of pet-keeping. Was this true for other cultures as well?

In the US, the timing and setting of the Little Golden Books' introduction certainly invite comparisons with Ralph Lutts's analysis in *The Nature Fakers* of the very different "war of the naturalists" controversy that erupted forty years earlier in the US news media, pitting writers of popular sentimental animal fictions against self-styled scientists who desired more realism and brutality especially in primary-school textbook depictions of animal life. Lutts concludes that the war, waged largely in newspaper editorials, was symbolically won when then sitting President Theodore Roosevelt weighed in strongly against what he termed the "nature fakers," all writers of bestselling anthropomorphic fictions such as Ernest Thompson Seton and William J. Long. The rampant anthropomorphism that Hübben identifies in the Little Golden Books might be seen to register a profound swing in the other direction, that is, toward an embrace of anthropomorphic animals that persists today.

Yet what accounts for such an abrupt turn by the 1940s concerning cultural sentiments about animals in children's fiction? Does it reflect the establishment of the authority of the natural sciences, or the philosophical crisis of "the human" coming to a head in the twentieth century? And how might children's picture books illuminate convergences of these academic phenomena? Eileen Crist's *Images of Animals*, Philip Armstrong's *What Animals Mean in the Fictions of Modernity*, and my own *Animal Stories: Narrating across Species Lines* offer very different accounts of how animal stories to varying degrees influence and reflect changing perceptions of nonhuman life in academic and public spheres, which might help to supply greater context for Hübben's claims.

A more precise historical argument is implied in the thesis's conclusion, where Hübben notes that most of the examples analyzed throughout are from the first couple of decades of Little Golden Books. This begs the question: has the anthropomorphic sentiment stayed the same or become more virulent, diffuse, or reversed in recent decades? Are there any indications in the Little Golden Books that the animal rights movement, gaining significant steam from 1975 onward with the publication of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*, leads to or reflects any persistent, meaningful changes in perceptions of animal life?

Circling back to the first chapter, the effects of these books on nonhuman lives are flagged with an amazing image: Koko, the celebrity American sign-language-literate lowland mountain gorilla, being read the Little Golden Book version of *The Three Little Kittens*. Hübben's reading of the scene unpacks its many "unsettling" qualities, showing how the idealized domestic arrangement of bodies in the photo is enclosed by a wire fence. The photo moreover infantilizes Koko by casting her in the position of a child being read to. Hübben asks, "Is [Koko] communicating or refusing to communicate? Is she seeing or not seeing? And what is she, this gorilla who has been introduced to human language [...]? How does she imagine herself in relation to the fictional animals in the picture book" (36)?

Such questions are in keeping with the theory-of-mind speculations about great apes involved in similar language experiments, yet Hübben offers a very literary answer: "We may even wonder to what extent Koko is herself a fiction, a product of the all too human desire to bring nonhuman animals

under our sphere of influence,” or, in other words, that Koko is “almost as much a fiction as the cats in the picture book she is reading, [for] she herself disappears in this entanglement” (36). These are great speculations, and ripe for extension to the Little Golden Book that thematizes the life of another ape celebrity, the chimpanzee television star J. Fred Muggs, which Hübben discusses later. Can the animal ever precede its representation? Reflecting back on the questions of moral education in children’s literature, child readers likewise might be fictions co-constituted by the Little Golden Books. Especially in the case of books that Hübben identifies as instilling pet-keeping standards, it seems necessary to ask: does the child—or the animal for that matter—who requires the book for proper socialization precede its own projection by the author/artists? I would add that the succession of pet kittens provided to Koko throughout her life adds still more complications to what the photo says about how the Little Golden Books shape the lives of human children and other animals.

More can be said, too, about how Hübben’s methodological turn away from both reader-response analysis and detailed consumer-data studies allows for uncertainty in the thesis about who actually buys Little Golden Books and for what purpose. Do they reach the targeted middle-class audience? What might others make of them? Especially at the time of their emergence in mid-century America, they would seem to have metonymic potentials that do not necessarily cancel out the metaphoric functions of animal characters cast in suburban idylls in the Little Golden Books. What about adult buyers who use them in order to learn how to read, or to aspire to upward class mobility? Who would be most anxious about their own or their children’s literacy and class status? It stands to reason that working-class, immigrant, or non-literate parents would find multiple uses in these books beyond entertaining their kids. On a related note, the depiction of suburbia as attractive and desirable also seems to say as much about the desires of buyers themselves as it does about what they want for the next generation. Adults coming to cities from rural childhoods themselves conceivably have a special interest in sharing stories of farm animals and pets with children that they are raising in urban and suburban environments that increasingly put constraints on everyday interactions with nonhuman animals.

Hübben points to the distinctive “this book belongs to ...” emblem facing the title page in all the

Little Golden Books—which invites children to write their own names to assert ownership of the book as property—as a sign of their “appeal to middle-class ideology,” buttressed by the aristocratic pretention of owning a library. Thinking of how the books circulate beyond the point of sale, it seems important to ask what happens when the books are borrowed or handed down from others who have already inscribed them. Is the previously inscribed emblem, signaling prior ownership, then alienating, challenging, or otherwise troubling middle-class identification? That the Great Depression would have been an immediate memory for adults experiencing the first Little Golden Books further suggests ways in which the books might have a formative effect on class consciousness. Would people who have not necessarily experienced food security or stable home lives themselves find reassurance in their visions of women, girls, and feminized animals kept in middle-class security? How might this relate to the feline mothering family dynamics as opposed to canine dominating relations of ownership that the first chapter locates at the heart of so many of the best-loved Little Golden Books? And to the racist and imperialist fantasies with which some but not all readers feel “at home” in the racially segregated US, especially in the early decades of their publication history as the nation rises to a dominant global power?

Their collective power is another important aspect, for, as Hübben observes, the Little Golden Books “are not like other books in the sense that they are often described as a collective” (49). As a US-based scholar, I could not help but think immediately of another book collective, namely, the Harlequin Romance and the role of publishers’ imprints more generally in the romance genre. What conclusions might we draw about literature and society from the fact that Little Golden Books and Harlequin Romances are the literary genres most reliably found in grocery stores? Can we conclude that their audiences are being conceived similarly, following Janice Radway’s findings in *Reading the Romance* about how books can be aggressively marketed to adult female consumers doing the shopping for their families, becoming successful despite all the signs that their creators are disparaging their consumers? The similarly colorful covers and questionable literary qualities, never mind their shared presumption that leisure time is effectively managed through engagements with mass-marketed fantasy fictions, all seem to beg further inquiry

into the mapping of class, gender, and other identity categories into the discourses of high/low culture. But what of species?

Human-animal studies scholarship more generally has gravitated toward “an animal-centered perspective” (11), albeit also notoriously frustrated attempts to define how that relates to ethical practice in scholarship. Some see it as advocacy, but Hübben’s examples clearly complicate such measures by identifying how “messages that the animals send out can be complex, sometimes conservative, and often contradictory” (14). It is a challenging context in which to navigate reading practices that are, in Hübben’s words, “‘for animals’ [...in order to] help both adult and young readers to understand how species difference is constructed in popular culture” (31). For instance, zoos depicted with “less bars and cages and more ‘natural’ habitats” might strike contemporary readers as “reflect[ing] an evolution in thinking and living with animals” (15), but zoo histories like Nigel Rothfels’s *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* make the case that these changes can only ever be about the aesthetics of animal representation when the conditions of captivity remain in place. Indeed, Hübben’s comparison of the 2002 title *How the Zebra Got Its Stripes* and the similarly titled but very differently conceived 2004 title *How the Camel Got Its Hump* would appear to suggest that more can be made of these two books’ being published so recently, and authored by the same couple, while yet coming to remarkably different conclusions about the politics of animal captivity.

At times the thesis uses the terms “humanist” and “anthropocentrist” interchangeably, while at other moments seems to be identifying “a humanist worldview” in a more nuanced way, for instance, as “built on the primacy of language and [animals’] likeness with humans” (34). In their variability on this point, an uneven intellectual legacy of humanism might be teased out as having been materialized in the pages of the Little Golden Books, along with the implications for the future of them. Although Hübben doesn’t use the term, I think the case could be made that her reading of the Little Golden Books reflects the kind of posthumanist perspective articulated by such diverse animal studies scholars as Wolfe, Nicole Shukin, and Kalpana Seshadri.

I certainly agree with Hübben’s statement that “[a]nthropomorphic animals are not always a sign of anthropocentrism; because of their status

as hybrids they can also potentially challenge human supremacy” (10). They are also not best seen as points along a developmental continuum. In a spot-on reading of John Rowe Townsend’s *Written for Children*, Hübben makes the important point that “[i]deas of kinship between humans and animals are not unique to children’s literature and they should not be treated as if they belong to a primitive phase in either humanity’s or the child’s development” (31). Yet, in the sixth case study, she points to some examples that do just that. How does this dynamic relate to a sense of some Little Golden Books as requiring postcolonial and antiracist critique? Are some examples more dangerously proffering questionably “true facts” about people than animals? Can the two be separated?

I also wanted to hear more from Hübben about how the childhood-nostalgic value of the Little Golden Books for many generations of readers by now makes them ripe for parody. The 2013 publication of the bestseller *Everything I Need to Know in Life I Learned from the Little Golden Books* by their longtime editor and children’s book author Diane Muldrow initiated what promises to be a meta-series with subsequent titles that replace “in Life” with “about Love” and “about Family” and so on. Their formula recycles images from the most iconic Little Golden Books, revising them only by substitutions of words for messages geared toward adult humor (i.e., “Sweatpants are bad for morale”). Their very existence suggests an evolutionary leap into a new kind of commodity, selling the very nostalgia for nostalgia that Frederic Jameson warned marks the erasure of history in postmodern culture.

It probably says too much about me that I was surprised not to find in the thesis any mention of how the Little Golden Books have become an internet meme through satirically retitled covers. No one can un-see the title illustrated by a dog in a hospital bed morphed from *Good-bye Tonsils* to *Good-bye Testicles*. Admittedly, my quick search just now turned up comparatively little animal content in these exploitations (or are they celebrations?) of the Little Golden Books’ current camp value. In those that did, however, I think I see some of the resistant politics that Hübben envisions. Is *Good-bye Testicles* making me giggle nervously by inviting criticism of the everyday violence of spay/neuter practice as becoming dogma in US veterinary practice? Can such re-uses more broadly serve a critical purpose in the discussion of animals in Little Golden Books?

Admittedly, my questions are thorough and maybe even tough because the thesis is so very suggestive. Resisting easy reductions of animal characters to mere metaphor, Hübben advances the insights of human-animal studies scholarship in children's literature by asking how nonhuman beings operate as animals in the Little Golden Books. As Hübben puts it in her conclusion, "children's books can be simultaneously unorthodox and conservative" (219), especially when it comes to representing violence against animals, and these aspects might be seen as academically and politically inspirational: "These books provide models for interactions with animals and therefore I feel that when we read them, either in an academic context or with young readers, we owe it to the animals to take their presence seriously" (16). Her thorough knowledge of the Little Golden Books persuaded me by and large to concur with many of her thoughtful speculations.

Susan McHugh

Svante Landgraf, *Fångenskap och flykt. Om frihetstemat i svensk barndomsskildring, reseskildring och science fiction decennierna kring 1970*. Linköping Studies in Arts and Science 699, Linköpings universitet. Linköping 2016.

Avhandlingens mål er å studere "[...] hur frihetens hinder och möjligheter skildras och diskuteras i svensk litteratur från sextioalet och framåt" (9). *Frihet*, intet mindre! Kan man tenke seg et større tema? Finnes det noen deler av et menneskes liv som ikke kan ses på som en form for frihetsutøvelse eller mangel på frihet? Med en slik problemstilling har Svante Landgraf gitt seg selv en stor oppgave. La oss se hvordan han har løst den.

Selv om dette åpenbar er en monumental oppgave, fortjener den også respekt: Hvorfor skal man ikke gå til litteraturen for å undersøke opplevelsen av frihet? Er det ikke nettopp naturlig å lese litteratur – utvilsomt en av de beste uttrykkene for menneskelig erfaring – for å finne ut hvordan frihet oppleves, begrenses og utøves? Selv om andre vitenskaper og uttrykksformer (for eksempel filosofi, sosiologi, rettsvitenskap og statsvitenskap) kan bidra til å forstå deler av frihetsbegrepet, er vel særlig *litteraturen* en god kilde til å forstå en slik grunnleggende menneskelig erfaring, selv om det metodisk er vanskelig. Her fortjener altså avhandlingen

og dens forfatter honnør: Ikke mange tør å gripe fatt i et slik stort og viktig tema. Spørsmålet om frihet er et grunnleggende menneskelig spørsmål og det er viktig at vi – selv i Nordens rike og fredelige hjørne av verden – tar spørsmålet opp til vurdering.

Avhandlingen er utarbeidet ved Linköpings Tema Q, Kultur och samhälle, ved Institusjonen for studier av samhällsutveckling och kultur – altså fra en forskningsenhet som har gjort temabasert forskning til sitt program. I en tid hvor akademisk suksess synes å bli knyttet til stadig snevrere forskningsområder, er det oppmuntrende at litteraturvitenskapen kan trekkes inn i utforskningen av større samfunnsutfordringer. Dette er også en avhandling som på godt og vondt ikke lar seg begrense av tradisjoner og etablerte arbeidsformer, men fritt og ubundet nærmer seg et stort spørsmål. Innledningsvis kan vi si at det utvilsomt er positivt at litteraturen kan brukes som inngang til frihetstematikken. Det er også en avhandling som er basert på en bred lesning og som gir reelle innsikter i viktige deler av den svenske litteraturen. Den peker også fremover og viser at andre store sosiale tema – som miljø, aldring, helse og sport – kan undersøkes gjennom litteraturen. Den har imidlertid også viktige metodiske og utvalgsmessige problemer som fortsatt er uløste. Dette skal vi se nærmere på etter hvert.

Avhandlingen har tre hoveddeler: Etter en innledende redegjørelse for det forskningsmessige utgangspunktet, følger først en del som handler om *barndomsskildringer* – med Jan Myrdal, Sun Axelson, P. C. Jersild, Sven Lindgren og Lars Gustafsson som eksempler. Deretter følger en del om *reiseskildringer*, med tekster av Lars Gustafsson, Sven Lindqvist, Per Olof Sundman, Per Wästberg, Sara Lidman og Jan Myrdal. Deretter er det en del om *science fiction*, med tekster av Lars Gustafsson, Sam J. Lundwall og Peter Nilson. Til sist avsluttes avhandlingen med en oppsummering av funnene, men hvor det også trekkes inn en helt ny sjanger, *fremtidsstudier*, det vil si sakprosatekster som handler om hvordan man tror framtiden kommer til å bli i Sverige.

For å gjennomføre denne dristige ambisjonen om å analysere frihetstemaet i litteraturen, har Landgraf nemlig valgt en analysemodell som forsøker å avgrense det svært u håndterlige frihetsbegrepet. For det første undersøker han tre sjangre som han mener er naturlig knyttet til ulike arketyriske menneskelige erfaringer: For det første barndomsskildringer, som jo ofte kan inneholde en opp-