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The *Barn* and the Beast:
The Queerness of Child-Animal Figurations in Scandinavian Literature and Culture

By

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requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Scandinavian Language and Literature

in the

Graduate Division

of the

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation takes as its starting point my own fascination, as well as a broader cultural fascination, with what I call child-animal figurations. I use the phrase “child-animal figurations” to refer to the range of relationships and associations between children and animals that are as prevalent in art and literature as they are in everyday life. Though these figurations are often considered “natural,” this dissertation argues that child-animal figurations can be highly charged sites for testing the limits of development, subjectivity, power, and species. I make this argument through analysis of several examples of Scandinavian literature and a Finnish documentary film. Scandinavian literature and culture offer a rich context in which to test hypotheses about child-animal figurations, not least because children and “nature”—including animals—enjoy special statuses in the Nordic countries, both in the figural traditions and in contemporary social realities. Drawing on scholarship in children’s literature, childhood studies, animal studies, and queer studies, this dissertation suggests that Scandinavian child-animal figurations provide new and critical insight for how we interpret narratives, including the all-important narrative of how—or whether—to grow up.

The first chapter considers the critical relationship among childhood, animals, and citizenship in two canonical Scandinavian children’s texts. Drawing on Kathryn Bond Stockton’s notions of the “the child queered by innocence” and “sideways growth,” I argue the protagonists in these texts can be understood as queer child figures whose non-normative development, facilitated by the animal, presents a surprising deviation from the nation-building agendas otherwise laid out in the texts. The second chapter examines autobiographical works about childhood by three twentieth-century Norwegian authors, whose texts suggest that animals are not only good to *think with* but to *remember with* as well. I argue that the autobiographical child can be understood not only as a figure of the author’s interior or of her past, but also as a version of “sideways growth” (Stockton) in the form of a text. The third and final chapter engages with examples that test the limits of species and subjectivity, including Tove Jansson’s Moomin series, which I read through a posthumanist lens (against the grain of the humanism that dominates Jansson scholarship), and the documentary film *Hobbyhorse Revolution*, in which I read the Finnish girl on her hobbyhorse as a cyborg in the sense put forth by Donna Haraway. In concluding the dissertation, I argue that the common notion of the “competent child” does not go far enough in explaining what makes the Nordic child a fascinating figure, and I propose the figure of the Nordic queer child as a necessary complement to the “competent” or “autonomous” child.

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INTRODUCTION

Child-Animal Figurations in Context

This dissertation takes as its starting point my own fascination, as well as a broader cultural fascination, with what I call child-animal figurations. I use the phrase “child-animal figurations” to refer to the range of relationships and associations between children and animals that are as prevalent in art and literature as they are in everyday life. From children’s love of their pets and stuffed animals to “The Ugly Duckling” and Disney films, these figurations are so common as to seem “natural,” so pervasive that they are often rendered invisible. As this dissertation will show, however, child-animal figurations can be highly charged sites for testing the limits of development, subjectivity, power, and species. I make this argument through analysis of several examples of Scandinavian literature and a Finnish documentary film. Scandinavian literature and culture offer a rich context in which to test hypotheses about child-animal figurations, not least because children and “nature”—including animals—enjoy special statuses in the Nordic countries, both in the figural traditions and in contemporary social realities. Drawing on scholarship in children’s literature, childhood studies, animal studies, and queer studies, this dissertation suggests that Scandinavian child-animal figurations provide new and critical insight for how we interpret narratives, including the all-important narrative of how—or whether—to grow up. I ultimately argue that the common notion of the “competent child” does not go far enough in explaining what makes the Nordic child a fascinating figure, and I propose the figure of the Nordic queer child as a necessary complement to the “competent” or “autonomous” child.

Child-Animal Figurations in Life and Literature

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the animal for some of the most common ways of thinking about the child. Like animals, children can be unruly and uninhibited, driven by primal needs and desires. Like animals, children often lack control over their bodies and behaviors. And like animals, children may lack manners, self-awareness, and language. Fundamentally, both children and animals are thought to be *wild*. The difference between the child and the animal, it would seem, is that the child eventually grows up and becomes civilized through a process of human development. The question of development is at the crux of this project, and I elaborate on that question later in the introduction (“Growing Up, Growing Sideways”). Here, I want to begin to deconstruct the “natural” association between children and animals, in part by drawing attention to the breadth and variety of child-animal figurations that are so often taken for granted. I will also put child-animal figurations in historical context and consider the scholarship on child-animal topics.

I define the term *child-animal figurations* broadly, taking it to include a wide range of associations between children and animals. These associations take many forms, including observation, encounter, relationship, subjugation, transformation, memory, and metaphor. To enumerate some examples, children love their pets, delight in seeing animals at the zoo, and enjoy watching birds, insects, and other

wild creatures. Children form attachments to teddy bears and other animal toys, often “voicing” these in pretend play. Children sometimes behave like animals—they roar, crawl, slither, and scratch—both as a form of make-believe and as a form of “acting out.” Children consume animal images and stories through books and other media; many children consume animal flesh in the form of meat. Children are small, often sharing more in size and perspective, with, say, a dog, than with adults. For their part, adults often assess children in terms of the animal: children are both as innocent and as beastly; to compare an adult to a child or an animal is almost always an insult; while some adults treat their children like pets, others treat their pets like children. As this list suggests, many child-animal figurations have a positive valence, while others are ambivalent (eating meat), and others, such as a child showing a pattern of abuse towards animals, are considered dangerous and can even disqualify the child from the assumption of innocence.

In books and other media, where children perhaps most frequently encounter animals, child-animal figurations likewise take many forms. From children’s classics like *Black Beauty* (Sewell 1877) and *Charlotte’s Web* (White 1952), to popular movies like *The Lion King* (Allers, Minkoff, and Hahn 1996), to nonfiction texts about bugs or bears—animals are everywhere to be found in children’s literature and film. Very often these books and movies feature child-animal figurations in their content, whether in the form of child characters’ relationships with animals (as in *Charlotte’s Web*), or in the form of an anthropomorphized child-animal character (such as Peter Rabbit). Many texts also feature children becoming animals (or trying to), as with Max in *Where The Wild Things Are* (Sendak 1974) or with the *Animorphs* series (Applegate 1996–2001), in which the child characters have the ability to turn into the animals they touch. Books like *Pat the Bunny* (Kunhardt [1940] 2001) invite young children to “interact” with animals in the text through a tactile experience, while other books have buttons for animal sounds, thus engaging the child’s multiple senses in making sense of the animal. I further explore the range of animals in children’s texts in Chapter Three. For now, it is important to note that in addition to the many child-animal figurations within children’s texts, I also consider the child reader’s (or viewer’s) relationship to the animal in the text as a child-animal figuration.

The above examples are, of course, Anglo-American. Though Scandinavian scholarship on children’s texts is robust indeed (see “The Special Case of Scandinavia” below), the Anglo-American focus continues to dominate in international research on children’s literature. Thus, part of this dissertation’s contribution is in drawing further attention to Scandinavian children’s literature for an international scholarly audience. Of course, animals are as important for Scandinavian children’s texts as they are for British and American ones. Prior to (and even into) the nineteenth century, most children’s books in Scandinavia were translated from other languages and tended to be highly didactic. One example is *Godmand eller den norske Børneven* (1834; Good-Man or the Norwegian Children’s Friend), discussed in my Chapter One, which, predictably for its time, figures the animal in utilitarian terms. The nineteenth century in Scandinavia saw a proliferation of folk and fairy tales, many of which feature animals representing the boundaries between civilization and wilderness. These include a mechanical bird in

Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "Nattergalen" ([1844b] 1990; "The Nightingale") and a bear king in Asbjørnsen and Moe's "Hvitebjørn kong Valemon" (1871; "White-Bear-King-Valemon"). Picture books became increasingly common around the turn of the twentieth century, and the Swedish author and illustrator Elsa Beskow's books are among the best of these, with her charming and realistic depictions of forest creatures (Beskow 1910). Twentieth century examples of Scandinavian children's texts that feature animals include Karen Michaëlis's series of books (1929–39) about the animal-loving tomboy named Bibi (a predecessor to Pippi Longstocking) and Thorbjørn Egner's *Klatremus og de andre dyrene i Hakkebakkeskogen* (1953; *Claus Climbermouse and the Other Animals in the Huckybucky Forest*), which depicts anthropomorphized animals in a woodland community. In the twenty-first century, much attention has been paid to the quality of Scandinavian picture books. Highlights from this period include Lisa Aisato's *Fugl* (Bird; 2013), which shows a child's rugged transformation from girl to bird, and the strange creations (e.g., rabbit-like creatures who sport antlers and carry pistols) of Per Dybvig's imagination (2015).

Though child-animal figurations are clearly striking in their number and variety, especially in literature, they are often inconspicuous in everyday life. What can account for this? An overview of the history of Western thought about children and animals sheds light on this question. Aristotle understood children to be like animals in that they are not capable of rationality, happiness, or choice, though unlike animals, children have the potential for these qualities through a process of growth (Chambliss 1982, 35–36). Aristotle was also concerned that "unchecked cruelty towards animals will lead to further cruelty towards fellow humans" (Ratelle 2015, 7). This is a concern shared by the Enlightenment philosopher John Locke, whose *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* ([1693] 1970) figures the child as a "tabula rasa"—a blank slate. Though prone to bad behavior, including harming animals, the child, according to Locke, is "moldable" through education and adult guidance. Importantly, for Aristotle and Locke, the child's kindness towards animals does not have to do with animal welfare but with the child's potential to become a good adult and citizen. This theme is reflected in children's texts from every period, where the animal is often used as a didactic tool to teach lessons from morals to math—a problem I further consider in Chapter One. For the Romantic philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose *Émile* ([1762] 2020) conceived of the child as "natural" and innocent, the child's sympathy for the animal is innate. Rousseau sees the animal not as a source of education for the child, but as a source of empathy, especially around shared suffering (Ratelle 2015, 9). This position represents a historical shift in which both the child and the animal are seen as subjects. Though Locke and Rousseau still bear heavily on conceptions of the child, ideas about childhood in the twenty-first century also account for the urgent global climate crisis. The child, always a symbol of futurity, is now frequently figured as the only hope to literally save the world, including its animal inhabitants. The child-animal figuration in our time is thus a figuration of existential doom on the one hand and of posthumanist potential on the other.

One important point to make in reflecting on this history is that it largely denies a critical fact: children are not just *like* animals, they *are* animals—as are

human adults. Denying the animality of the human being on the one hand, and the humanity of the child on the other, has long been a powerful two-pronged strategy for reinforcing hierarchies in which *man* is at the top. As Amy Ratelle puts it, “the configuration of childhood as separate from and subordinate to adulthood is, much like the distinctions between the human and the animal, predicated on maintaining the illusion of a clear boundary between two constructed states of being” (Ratelle 4). While I agree that the human-animal and adult-child binaries are highly constructed, some efforts to deconstruct these binaries have been misguided. As Zoe Jaques points out, for example, the animal rights activism strategy of comparing animals to humans (animals suffer, possess reason, etc.) “ironically accentuates the very anthropocentrism it seeks to undercut” (2017a, 44). Agreeing with this logic, I use the term “animal” in this dissertation (unless further distinction is necessary) to refer to animals that are not human, since terms like “nonhuman animals” subtly reinforce the human-animal dichotomy they mean to challenge. Relatedly, I am skeptical of schemas that define the relationship between childhood and adulthood as one of continuity or, per Marah Gubar, “kinship”—a model meant to discourage conceiving of children as a “separate species” (Gubar 2016). What a child *is*—and whether children exist at all—is the most vexing problem in the field of childhood studies. Critically, this dissertation takes the position that children do exist, that they are different from adults, and that the animal is essential for defining that difference.

Despite the scope and significance of child-animal figurations, questions regarding the child and the animal have been largely overlooked in the humanities. Gail F. Melson suggests this lack of scholarship is due to the extent to which people, including scholars, take child-animal relationships as a given. As Melson writes, “animals were so *there* as part of the woof and web of childhood, including my own, that I had never noticed them” (2005, 4). An early exception to this lack of scholarship (“early” relative to the young field of children’s literature) is Margaret Blount’s *Animal Land: The Creatures of Children’s Fiction* ([1974] 1977), in which the author argues that animals in children’s literature are fundamentally stand-ins for human beings. Most scholarship on the topic has followed Blount’s lead in emphasizing the metaphorical role of anthropomorphized animals in children’s texts. But of course, not all animals in children’s texts are anthropomorphized, and even those animals that are anthropomorphized occupy a complex position between human and nonhuman. Thanks in no small part to the intervention of animal studies, especially over the last two decades, there has been a shift in scholarly attention towards precisely this kind of problem. For example, Amy Ratelle (2015) argues that the Western philosophical and pedagogical tradition of “humanizing” the child is systemically complicated by the critical role of animals in children’s literature and film. Zoe Jaques (2015) suggests that children’s literature shares productive affinities with posthumanism, as both are invested in generating possible worlds that upend old hierarchies. And in *Childhood and Pethood*, various authors point to how the titular categories are historically and culturally “co-constituted,” creating a range of liabilities and opportunities for children and animals alike (Feuerstein and Nolte-Odhiambo 2017).

My dissertation builds on this scholarship and moves it in new directions. As the following chapters will show, I share with the authors noted above an interest in the political and aesthetic potential of child-animal alliances. I also share the concern for how “humanizing” the child—long a driving force behind much scholarship in children’s literature and childhood studies—can have the adverse effect of undermining animal subjectivity while reinforcing humanist and patriarchal regimes. While my dissertation includes a focus on children’s literature, it also addresses literature for adults, thus taking theoretical work about children and animals in literature beyond the realm of children’s texts, where that work has (unsurprisingly) been focused. Additionally, my work invokes the figure of the queer child to problematize the notion of development in context of the animal. While the question of animality and child development has recently been addressed by various scholars—not least Amy Ratelle, whose work I further address below—my dissertation gives new and sustained attention to how the figure of the queer child offers critical insight for what is at stake for growing up with and through the animal.

Growing Up, Growing Sideways: The Animal and Development

The arguments in this dissertation turn on two central ideas. The first is that the animal is essential to the human child’s process of growing up. The second is that the animal can play a critical role in disrupting, distorting, or upending that process. I now turn to the work of Amy Ratelle and Kathryn Bond Stockton respectively to lay the theoretical groundwork for these two ideas.

In *Animality and Children’s Literature and Film* (2015), Amy Ratelle argues that the animal, both in and outside of texts, is critical to the development of the modern, Western child. She writes:

The reliance on animals in children’s literature over the past two centuries has become a key means by which the civilizing process that children go through has been mediated by the animal body. Children are asked both implicitly and explicitly to identify with animals, but then to position themselves as distinctly human through the mode of their interactions with both lived animals and those depicted in literature and film. (Ratelle 2015, 10)

Here and throughout her monograph, Ratelle illuminates a remarkable paradox: the child needs the animal in order to become human. Through loving stuffed animals, caring for pets, observing animals in the wild, and reading animal books, children learn the positive traits and skills—kindness, responsibility, reason, literacy—that they will eventually direct towards other human beings and towards a productive adult life. As Ratelle suggests, this redirection of affection and skills towards human life necessarily entails a negation of the animal. This negation takes various forms, from tucking a teddy bear inside a box to accepting the premise of eating meat.

I want to suggest that what Ratelle outlines is a model of normative child development—that is, a process in which the animal aspects and animal affinities of the child are gradually phased out over time. (This phasing out is also reflected in fiction, as animals are less present in Young Adult texts than they are in texts aimed

at younger readers (Jaques 2017b, 109).) To make this point through an example, consider the teddy bear: while a young child would be encouraged to embrace and sleep with a teddy bear, and while it may be understandable for a teenager to do so, especially in times of distress, most people would consider it unusual, or even unsettling, for an adult to sleep with a teddy bear nightly—especially if that adult’s bed is shared with a sexual partner. As even this simple illustration suggests, the acceptability of the child’s closeness to animals and animality is predicated in part on the child’s presumed innocence, while the adult’s lack of innocence makes proximity to the animal or animal behavior suspect. Fundamentally, normative development requires the child to outgrow her special connection to the animal. Yet, as the examples in this dissertation suggest, some children fail to do so—or at least fail to do so to the full extent or in the proper time. To explore what is at stake for the child who fails to outgrow or refuses to negate the animal, I turn to the figure of the queer child.

In *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (2009), Kathryn Bond Stockton argues that the emergence of the gay child towards the end of the twentieth century makes possible an understanding of the figure of the child—and by extension, children in general—as queer. For Stockton, the “gay child” exists only in retrospect—from the position of the queer adult who can say, “I was a queer child”—since we live in a world in which children are generally presumed to be straight. Though this reality may be shifting (even in the decade since Stockton’s book was published), it remains overwhelmingly the case, not least, as Stockton points out, because to call a child queer is to sexualize that child, which is to fly in the face of the overwhelming cultural and institutional insistence upon the child’s innocence. That innocence, as James R. Kincaid (1992) and others have shown, is fundamentally figured as an innocence of sexuality and has been the predominant factor in defining childhood in the West since the nineteenth century. As Stockton makes clear, even children who do not “grow up to be queer” can only ever be “not-yet-straight” (2009, 27), since they are presumed to be nonsexual. But herein lies the paradox: adults expect the child to be nonsexual even as they insist on the child’s progress towards the destination of heterosexual adulthood. As Tison Pugh frames the problem, “children cannot remain innocent of sexuality while learning about normative sexuality, and heterosexuality cannot stand as normative if innocence is the defining cultural phantasy of children’s identity. And thus heterosexuality itself is rendered queer” (2010, 8).

Helpfully, Stockton distinguishes categories of the queer child, which lend nuance to the concept more broadly. There is the “ghostly gay child”—the child retrospectively identified as queer; the “grown homosexual”—a figure infantilized for their “failure” to properly develop; the “child queered by Freud,” who will grow up to be straight but is a “sexual child with aggressive wishes” (2009, 27); and the “child queered by innocence,” who is queer for their “estrangement from what they approach: the adulthood against which they must be defined” (31). Most of the child figures in this dissertation belong to the last two categories and exemplify what Stockton calls “normative strangeness” (30). Relative to the presumed normativity (or, we might say, standard humanity) of adults—what Nikolajeva terms “aetonormativity” (2010)—the child is queer and strange. As Stockton shows, this

queerness has only increased over the course of the twentieth century—an ironic outgrowth of efforts to preserve the child’s innocence. Noting the Swedish activist Ellen Key’s call in 1900 for the twentieth century to be “the century of the child,” Stockton rightly suggests that the first part of Key’s platform (child protections) has been broadly embraced while the second part (child freedoms) has not (Key 1900). Laws meant to protect children from harm have limited what the child is allowed to be. A worker, a criminal, a sexual subject: these are adult roles, and when children show signs of occupying them, their queerness is accentuated.

To manage the problem of the child’s unarticulated yet keenly felt queerness, adults have devised a paradigm that Stockton calls *delay*. In delaying adulthood by a certain amount of time (just how much time is the subject of endless legal, cultural, and academic debates), the child is allowed a period of “gradual growth” and “slow unfolding” before eventually—and decidedly—growing up (Stockton 2009, 4). Childhood delay entails what Stockton cleverly terms *sideways growth*—that is, forms of development that are unexpected, unregulated, and/or unsanctioned by adults. Critically, sideways growth is acceptable so long as the behaviors are not too extreme and, most importantly, do not last for too long. If sideways growth goes too far, it threatens the linear and finite project of growing up; the further sideways growth extends, the queerer the child becomes. Stockton, to my mind, correctly identifies the animal as a key factor in sideways growth. The child, she suggests, sometimes “requires an interval of animal” (53) and the child can use animals “metaphorically and materially to fashion a pause” (5). These are precisely the theoretical prospects to which I turn my attention in the chapters that follow. The queer child as I understand it presents challenges not only to the categories of heteronormativity and adulthood, but also to the category of species.

To some extent, the expansive notion of the child’s queerness that I am outlining is synonymous with non-normativity, though the normativity in question is decidedly a developmental one. Whereas Stockton is clearly interested in the figure of the eventually-queer adult, I am interested in the queer child illuminated in her latter two categories: the Freudian child and the innocent child. The Freudian child exhibits aggression, including sexual desire and the death drive. Stockton cites the example of Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955); I would cite Norwegian author Tarjei Vesaas’s character Unn, who seems to bring about her own slow death in an ice palace on the heels of a naked encounter with another eleven-year-old girl (Vesaas 1963). Stockton’s innocent child can be located in Hans Christian Andersen’s “Ugly Duckling” ([1844a] 1990) and in Henrik Ibsen’s character Hedwig in *The Wild Duck* (1884), as I discuss below. Of course, the Freudian child and the innocent child often overlap in one figure, as I would suggest they do in Astrid Lindgren’s Pippi Longstocking: though most often identified with her aggressive behaviors (skipping school, making messes, teaching boys a lesson), Pippi’s failure to live up to social standards sometimes reduces her to tears (Lindgren 1945).

With the possible exceptions of Tove Jansson’s Moomin books, which have some queer characters, and the Finnish documentary, which features a young woman who appears to have a girlfriend, the texts considered in this dissertation do not feature what Stockton calls “the ghostly gay child” or what I would refer to as LGBTQ children. That is, almost all of the child figures examined in this project

appear to be straight (or bound to be straight, per Stockton). My choice to employ queer theory in studying child figures who do not appear to be queer—in the LGBTQ sense—could reasonably evoke questions about why I did not choose another term or theoretical framework. Indeed, scholars have used other terms—“biocentric” (Melson 2005), “the wild child” (Mallan 2018)—in describing the child that engages with the animal, in life and in fiction. As I hope I have made clear, it is the way that queer theory in general—and Stockton’s theory of the queer child in particular—intervenes in assumptions about development that makes it compelling for my project. The idea of the queer child not only challenges a normative model of development, it also challenges the framework of development itself, questioning whether that framework has any claims to “nature.” In this way, Stockton’s theory of the child offers a valuable counterpoint to Ratelle’s explanation of normative child development with respect to the animal. In the exceedingly “unnatural” child-animal figurations examined in this dissertation—bear-girl kinship, boy-goose cyborgs, animals mediating memories, queer species, animal drag—the figure of the queer child plays a pivotal role in parsing purposes, stories, and species.

Children and Animals: The Special Case of Scandinavia

My scholarly training is in Scandinavian cultures and texts. Beyond that fact, there is a strong case to be made for using Scandinavian materials to explore my questions about the child and the animal. I will briefly make that case here. The Scandinavian countries (Norway, Denmark, and Sweden) and Nordic countries (the Scandinavian countries plus Finland and Iceland)—I often interchange the terms—are admired the world over for their robust social welfare states, relative gender equity, promotion of peace, and efforts on climate change. These policies have made for generally healthy and wealthy populations,¹ not least due their emphasis on the wellbeing of children. Scandinavian policies that strongly benefit children include generous parental leave (usually a year or more and often with stipulations that male parents take some leave), “child benefit” programs (state subsidizing of families with children, regardless of income level), and near universal access to affordable, quality childcare from age one (in Norwegian, *barnehage*, meaning “kindergarten”). These policies exist in addition to universal and (mostly) free health care and schooling, including higher education. Simply put, the Nordic nations are largely unparalleled in their efforts to safeguard and promote the rights and wellbeing of children.

These legal and political realities are grounded in broader historical and cultural contexts that suggest the Scandinavian child has long been understood as a relatively independent subject. In *Nordic Childhoods, 1700–1960*, the editors point to a long history of the notion of the “competent” Nordic child—also referred to as the “autonomous” child—which has roots in farm culture, folk beliefs, and a Lutheran tradition that encouraged literacy (Aasgard and Bunge 2017, 1–14). They

¹ Of course, wealth also enables these policies. Though I am not in a position to comment in any detail on the cause-effect relationships between wealth (most notably, Norway’s oil wealth) and generous social policies, the two are clearly interrelated in Scandinavia.

identify children's literature as a key source for modeling and reflecting the competent Scandinavian child. Though that figure is most famously embodied in Astrid Lindgren's character, Pippi Longstocking—who is even interpreted as a kind of *übermensch* (Berggren and Trägårdh 2010)—Ommundsen (2018) shows that the competent Scandinavian child in children's literature dates to the nineteenth century, an argument I affirm and adapt in my Chapter One. In *Beyond the Competent Child* (Brembeck, Barbro, and Kampmann 2004), the authors question assigning inherent value to the competent child figure, wondering whether contemporary expectations for the child's agency, which are often coded, present an unreasonable burden to children—especially those facing social barriers, including racism and poverty. The authors also question whether the competent child is a truly Nordic phenomenon and not a Western phenomenon more broadly. Although I am wary of Nordic exceptionalism, it is my position that there is something particular about the Nordic child—a particularity that might be described in terms of competence or autonomy, or, as I ultimately argue, in terms of queerness.

As the *Nordic Childhoods* editors point out, an "intimate relationship to nature" (Asgard and Bunge 2017, 11) is typically a defining trait of the Scandinavian child: skiing, picking mushrooms, and encountering wild animals are activities that can increase the child's sense of identification with the natural world, as well as her sense of independence. The intersection of the child and nature in Scandinavian contexts should not be understood only as an outgrowth of Romanticism; it also has to do with the everyday lived experiences of harsh climates, dramatic landscapes, dark winters, and midnight sun. Recent scholarship reads the Nordic child through the lens of ecocriticism. In *Ecocritical Perspectives on Children's Texts and Cultures: Nordic Dialogues*, the editors claim, "the Nordic competent child seems to have a special nature competence" (Goga et. al. 2018, 2). Nordic cultural traditions, such as *friluftsliv*, meaning "nature-based outdoor recreation" (2), help to create the conditions for that competence. The essays in the above volume examine how a range of concepts—including gender, colonialism, and the Anthropocene—complicate the idea of "nature" in contemporary Nordic texts for children. Notably, this anthology is the product of collaboration in the Nature in Children's Literature and Culture (NaChiLitCul) working group, based at Høgskulen på Vestlandet, a college in Bergen, Norway. NaChiLitCul is one of multiple professional groups and institutions in the Nordic countries dedicated to the study of children's texts and cultures, which include the Norsk Barnebokinstitut (The Norwegian Institute for Children's Books), where I conducted some of my research. The rich tradition of children's literature and childhood studies scholarship in Scandinavia, and the growing attention to nature and ecocriticism in that scholarship, strengthen the case for investigating questions about child-animal figurations in a Scandinavian context. Moreover, since the Scandinavian countries are united (by culture, language, history) yet distinct, it presents the opportunity to test hypotheses across place (national cultures) and time, as I especially do in this dissertation's first chapter.

As I have suggested, *the child* and *nature* enjoy singular statuses in the Nordic countries. Perhaps for this reason, Scandinavian child-animal figurations are often quite striking—not least in literature, where my interests primarily lie. Though it is

impossible to consider the entire history of child-animal figurations in Scandinavian literature, I want to conclude this section by highlighting a few prominent examples in light of the theoretical stakes I have outlined in this introduction. The Danish author Hans Christian Andersen often featured animals in his fairytales, with “Den Grimme Ælling” ([1844a] 1990; “The Ugly Duckling”) as the most famous example. “The Ugly Duckling,” in which the author imagines himself as the titular figure, is a story about an outsider finding his true identity through a process of transformation (from ugly duck to beautiful swan). Clearly centering the theme of coming-of-age, it is also, strikingly, a story about species confusion—and perhaps about having to change one’s species in the process of growing up. That Andersen was a sexual outsider is hardly irrelevant here (Andersen 2003, 615–620). Through the lenses of animal studies and the queer child, “The Ugly Duckling” might be read not just as a kind of coming-out tale (Gordon 2005), but one that implicates the presumed beastliness of both the child and the queer person. Though one can read the story as suggesting the ugly duckling “was a swan all along,” it also invites the reader to imagine the wrenching process—psychologically but also bodily—of becoming a new species.

Another important duck in Scandinavian literature is Henrik Ibsen’s *Vildanden* (1884; *The Wild Duck*). The play famously ends with the suicide of its child character, Hedvig. I agree with Toril Moi that Hedvig kills herself not because she confuses herself with the duck that Gregers Werle suggests as a sacrifice to prove her daughterly love, but because Gregers exploits Hedvig’s lack of power and experience to destroy her otherwise perfectly sound sense of metaphor (Moi 2006, 248–268). As Brian Boyd writes, “children are fascinated with the boundaries between humans and other animals [...] not because they have serious problems distinguishing one from another [...] but because they seek the pleasure of the *as if*” (2007, 224–25). In destroying Hedvig’s sense of distinction between “everyday” language (Moi) and metaphorical language, Gregers’s manipulation robs the child of poetic pleasure before it robs her of life, too. For Stockton, metaphor is an intrinsic talent of the child, a “sideways accretion” that frequently involves the animal, as in, “my dog is my wife” (Stockton 2009, 15). The “sideways growth” of metaphor and the child’s “lateral relations” (Stockton 2009, 91) to the animal are perfectly illustrated in the scene of Hedvig’s tragic death, in which the child clutches the duck at her breast. In some sense, the child who dies—especially at her own hand—is the queerest child of all: she rejects development unconditionally.

To consider a final example, I turn to *Pippi Långstrump* (Lindgren 1945; *Pippi Longstocking*). Once, in the children’s section of a bookstore in Stockholm, I saw a very young child look at a blown-up image of Pippi hoisting her horse in the air, and proclaim to her mother (in Swedish), “Pippi is so strong that she can lift a horse above her head!” This is what the Scandinavian child knows. That the Scandinavian child figure *par excellence* demonstrates her invincibility through feats of animal-lifting, that she lives with a monkey but no human family, that her dearest wish is to never grow up, offer some important clues about the significance of the queer child-animal figuration not only for the Nordic nations, but for the world: after all, it is this child—Pippi—that has established herself more surely than any other in the international canon of children’s literature. In the conclusion of this dissertation, I

return to Pippi Longstocking in context of the twenty-first century Nordic queer child-animal figuration.

Overview of the Chapters

In the first chapter, “Girls and Bears and Boys on Gooseback: Child-Animal Figurations in Scandinavian Nation Building,” I consider the critical relationship among childhood, animals, and citizenship in two canonical children’s texts: Maurits Hansen’s “Lille Alvilde” (1829; Little Alvilde), the first original Norwegian text for children, and *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige* (1906–07; *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*), Selma Lagerlöf’s Swedish classic. Challenging the Romantic reading of Hansen’s text, and following Donna Haraway, I argue that the girl-bear encounter at the heart of the story offers a model of queer interspecies kinship. I further suggest that “Lille Alvilde” can be understood as the queer child of Norwegian children’s literature, following Stockton’s notion of the child that is queer in its innocence. In Lagerlöf’s text, I argue that the boy-elf Nils is a queer species, as the stakes surrounding his sexuality and development are bound up with his status as a nonhuman being. I also consider how narrative delay and Nils’s intimacy with animals pose threats to the novel’s *Bildungs* premise. I conclude by suggesting that the separation of the animal from the child in Lagerlöf’s text has an echo in the separation of Norway from Sweden in 1905.

In Chapter Two, “Remembering with the Animal in Twentieth Century Autobiographies of Childhood,” I examine texts by three Norwegian authors. Taking as my premise that animals are not just good to *think with* but to *remember with* as well, I explore how the animal helps to mediate the writing of a life. In Sigurd Hoel’s *Veien til verdens ende* (1933; *The Road to the World’s End*), animals are mostly sources of trauma. I argue that while the text’s child protagonist fails to “use” the animal to grow up properly within the context of his community, animals are critical to his development as a writer. With a focus on the first chapter of Tarjei Vesaas’s *Båten om kvelden* (1968; *The Boat in the Evening*), I argue the author reworks the figure of the horse throughout his authorship as a means of negotiating problems of memory, masculinity, and growth. Finally I consider how the insistence in Cora Sandel’s authorship on the alliance between the child and the animal extends to her underexamined *Dyr jeg har kjent* (1945; *Animals I Have Known*), which I call, paradoxically, an autobiography about animals. In this chapter I ultimately suggest that the autobiographical child can be understood not only as a figure of the author’s interior, or of her past, but as a sideways literary construct.

In the third and final chapter, “Children and Animals Beyond Encounter: Queer Species, Animal Drag, Horsey Cyborgs,” I engage with three examples that test the limits of species and subjectivity. I first argue that Tove Jansson’s Moomin series (1945–1970) explodes the standard categories used to think about animals in children’s literature. I also argue that the overwhelmingly humanist readings of Jansson’s series overlook the Moomin texts’ obsession with species, including the decidedly posthumanist Hattifatteners. With Jon Fosse’s chapter book, *Dyrehagen Hardanger* (1993; *The Hardanger Zoo*), I invoke an expanded notion of drag to argue that the text’s characters fluctuate between the positions of child and animal.

Lastly, I examine Selma Vilhunen's *Hobbyhorse Revolution* (2017), a documentary about the remarkable hobbyhorse girls of Finland. Drawing on Haraway's notion of the cyborg and Jane Bennett's concept of "vibrant matter," I suggest the Finnish girl on her hobbyhorse is a child-animal figuration that refuses boundaries of age, gender, and species.

In concluding the dissertation, I argue that the figure of the Nordic queer child is critically helpful in understanding what makes Nordic childhood particular. I further suggest that queer childhood is of value and ought to be protected.

CHAPTER ONE
Girls and Bears and Boys on Gooseback:
Child-Animal Figurations in Scandinavian Nation Building

Introduction: Children's Literature and the Nation

As Christopher Kelen and Björn Sundmark point out in *The Nation in Children's Literature* (2013), the child and the nation are intertwined concepts. The co-emergence of modern childhood and modern nations is no coincidence. Not only do nations need children in order to reproduce themselves (their populations as well as their ideologies), the metaphor of childhood is critical to the mythos of the nation: nations are “born,” they self-define, they become sovereign (i.e., adult). Indeed, both children and nations are expected to grow up. “The idea of a nation without children,” write Kelen and Sundmark “would be empty of meaning—for it would be to cut it off both from its roots, from a continuously reimagined past, and its potentiality, an always renewed future” (263).

Children's literature can be understood as a key mechanism by which children are inculcated in a national identity and cause. In her seminal work, *The Case of Peter Pan* (1992), Jacqueline Rose argues that children's literature is a powerful tool by which adults mold and manipulate children. For Rose, children's literature “[seduces]” (2) and essentially colonizes the child. Though adults wield significant physical, political, and psychological power over children, Rose's argument wrongly assumes an immutable power relation between adults and children.² Scholars since Rose have challenged and nuanced this view. Clémentine Beauvais argues that while adults have *authority* (the power of experience), children possess *might* (the power of life not yet lived) (Beauvais 2015). Marah Gubar argues that children may “see through the seductive propaganda of books that urge them to take part in the project of imperial expansion” (71) and that child readers may act as “collaborators” with adult authors in constructing subversive narratives (Gubar 2009). While national children's literature can influence children in becoming a certain kind of adult and citizen, child readers—and aspects of the children's text itself—may resist, delay, or pervert the national and developmental agendas in these texts.

There are abundant examples of national children's texts that centralize animal figures. In the British tradition, *The Wind in the Willows* (Grahame 1908) evokes a pastoral Edwardian idyll through the adventures of its Mole, Toad, and Badger characters. Among American children's books, *Charlotte's Web* (White 1952) celebrates American farm life while *The Berenstain Bears* teach middle-class values.³ National children's texts that feature the animal are also common in Scandinavia: in tales such as “I Andegaarden” (1861; In the Duck Yard), Hans Christian Andersen uses animals to satirize Copenhageners' social mores; Elsa Beskow's books depict

² See Beauvais (2013) for a good overview and critique of scholarship elaborating on Rose's view of the powerful adult in relationship to children's literature.

³ In titles such as *The Berenstain Bears: God Bless Our Country* (Berenstain 2015), the patriotic motifs are explicit.

the Swedish forest as a magical realm where elfin children commune with mice and squirrels (Beskow 1910); and Frithjof Sælen's *Snorre sel* (1941; *Snorre the Seal*) is an allegory for the Nazi occupation of Norway and was banned by German officials.

Throughout this dissertation, I locate queerness in the child-animal figuration. In this chapter, the child-animal figuration takes the form of a little girl's encounter with a bear in the woods and of a boy who travels the Swedish nation on gooseback. In both cases, wilderness, in the form of the animal, encroaches on civilization in ways that I argue threaten the normative development of the child and of the nation. What purpose does the wild animal serve for the developmental project? How do the queering of species and development, mediated by the animal, help the child and the nation to grow up?

***Bjørn* and *Børn*⁴: Queer Kinship in Norway's First Story for Children**

Though best known as a major contributor to Norwegian National Romanticism and as an author of fiction for adults, Maurits Hansen (1794–1892) was also a prolific author of texts for children. His story "Lille Alvilde," first published in 1829 in *Den norske Huusven*, is considered the first original Norwegian children's text. On its surface, "Lille Alvilde" is a Romantic idyll about a little girl's encounter with a bear in the woods. I will argue that "Lille Alvilde" is, in fact, ambivalent about the nation-building project and presents a subversive alternative to the National Romantic standard in the form of queer interspecies kinship.

When Norway declared independence from Denmark in 1814, there was little to speak of in terms of Norwegian literary culture. Though rudimentary reading skills (enough to read the catechism) were almost universal, the reading of literature was mostly restricted to members of the educated civil class (*embedsstanden*).⁵ Since publishing within Norway was very limited until about 1850, many books were purchased abroad.⁶ What few children's books made their way to Norway in the early nineteenth century were Danish or were translated from European languages and were mostly ABC-books or illustrated readers and encyclopedias. Though there is scant evidence about child readership in early nineteenth century Norway, Sonja Hagemann has drawn on the memoirs of writers who grew up during this time to show there was a strong "leselyst" (Hagemann 1965, 50) [desire to read]⁷ among children of the civil class. Though these memoirs rarely mention children's books, the writers recall reading and being read to from books for adults. These accounts also point to a tradition of oral storytelling, especially in the form of folktales (*eventyr*). Additionally, visual representations from the first half of the nineteenth century in Norway, including the cover illustration of the collected editions of *Billed-Magazin for Børn* (1838–39), show

⁴ In the Dano-Norwegian of Hansen's text, *Bjørn* means "bear" and *Børn* means "children."

⁵ There were fewer than 900,000 people living in Norway in 1800, most of them rural peasants (Statistisk sentralbyrå, n.d.). The number of people reading literature in Norway in the early nineteenth century was probably in the low thousands.

⁶ Between 1814–48, an average of eighty-five titles were published in Norway each year (Tvetervås 1950, 180).

⁷ Translations without citation are my own.

children and adults engaged in shared reading practices (Figure 1). This evidence points to how adults and children co-participated in—and arguably co-created—an emerging literary culture in early nineteenth century Norway.

Figure 1

Cover illustration of the collected editions of *Billed-Magazin for Børn* (1838–39)



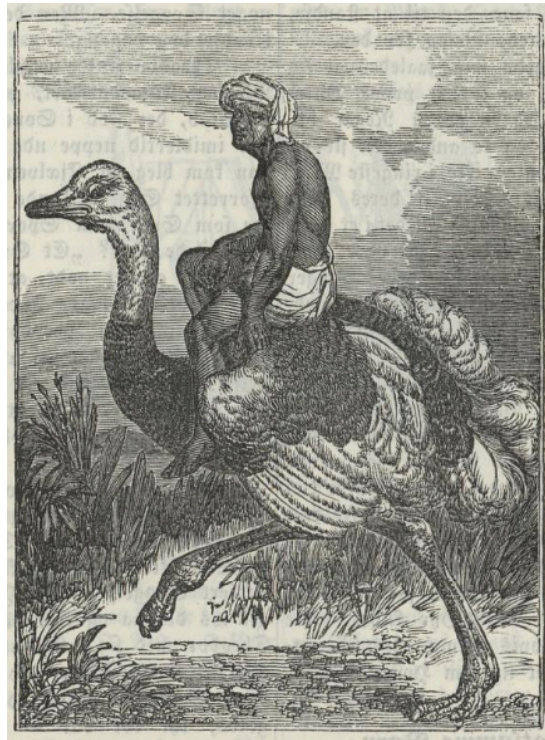
Child-Animal Figurations in Early Norwegian Texts for Children

“Lille Alvide” provides a remarkable example of the intersection of the child, the animal, and the nation in a children’s text. Two other children’s texts for which Hansen was responsible also emphasize the animal, and they merit some attention here. Hansen was well acquainted with European children’s literature of his time and he translated some texts from German, including (per the Norwegian title) *Godmand eller den norske Børneven, en Lærebog for Borger- og Almueskoler* (1834; Good-Man or the Norwegian Children’s Friend, A Reader for Civil and General Schools). *Godmand* is an Enlightenment era-inspired reader meant to educate children about topics ranging from plants and animals to religion and world languages. The text is structured as a conversation between children, who pose questions, and a kindly patriarchal figure (*Godmand*), who answers them. What is significant about the portrayal of animals in this text is that they are presented in terms of whether and/or how they are “til nytte” [of use] to humans. The chapters about animals are titled according to this logic: “Dyr, hvis Hud er Menneske til Nytte” [Animals whose Skin is of Use to People], “Dyr, hvis Fedt er Menneskene nyttigt” [Animals whose Fat is Useful to People], etc. As this section will suggest, the “usefulness” of the animal to the child goes well beyond its fur or fat: the animal is also “til nytte” in telling stories, including the all-important story of how (or whether) to grow up.

Animals also figure prominently in *Billed-Magazin for Børn* (1838–39). Co-edited by Hansen and Per Christian Asbjørnsen, *Billed-Magazin* was a monthly periodical that contained short pieces of fiction and nonfiction as well as

illustrations. The content (much of which was authored by Hansen) was meant to give Norwegian child readers access to the broader world, but from a perspective firmly rooted in “vort Land” (*Billed-Magazin for Børn*, 9) [our country]. Many of the magazine’s entries focus on animals. These entries take various forms: an encyclopedic article on the housefly, a dynamic illustration of a crocodile fighting a snake, a romantic depiction of reindeer and “Lapperne” [the Lapps]. Many of these entries contribute to the magazine’s nationalistic tone and agenda. Bears (strong), reindeer (native), and dogs (loyal, intelligent) are clearly associated with Norwegian and/or Nordic identity, while “exotic” animals—and animality itself—are associated with racialized others. For example, “Negrene”—a derogatory term for Black people—are described as having “Uldhaar” (227) [wool-hair]. In a story about ostriches, the “Kæmpflugls store Styrke” (121) [great bird’s immense strength] is confirmed by its ability to carry “to smaa Negere paa en gang” (122) [two small Black people at a time] or “en voxen Neger” [one adult Black person], as suggested by an illustration (Figure 2). This is one of many gestures in *Billed-Magazin*—racist and otherwise—that use the animal to mediate national identity.⁸

Figure 2
Illustration in *Billed-Magazin for Børn* (1838–9, 121)



⁸ Associating nonwhite humans with bestiality is a longstanding racist strategy used to reinforce white supremacy. Recent scholarship points to how this strategy is not only obviously dehumanizing but also relies on a false human-animal binary that disavows the animality of human beings. See Peterson (2013) and Johnson, L. (2018).

The animal at the center of “Lille Alvide” is a bear. Though it is difficult to say whether Hansen based this story on any particular text or tale, the motif of the girl-bear encounter is certainly present in northern European folklore. Within the Norwegian tradition, the folktale “Hvitebjørn kong Valemon” (1871; “White-Bear-King-Valemon”) is one example. In this tale, a princess falls in love with King Valemon, who is bear by day and man by night. The princess gives birth to their three children and eventually helps King Valemon to overcome his animal curse. This story offers a good example of what Arnegeir Berg describes as the ambivalence surrounding the figure of the bear in Norwegian folklore: on the one hand, the bear is seen as strong and noble, as human-like; on the other hand, the bear can be dangerous to humans—even predatory.⁹ As is the case in “Hvitebjørn kong Valemon,” the girl’s encounter with the predatory wild animal tends to have clear sexual overtones in European folklore. This motif is represented most famously in “Little Red Riding Hood.” Scholarship on “Little Red Riding Hood” shows how the tale, in its countless retellings based on versions by Perrault (1697) and the Brothers Grimm (1812), condemns female sexual desire and promotes male sexual and social dominance.¹⁰ (Of course, many modern retellings complicate or invert these power dynamics.¹¹) Part of what makes “Lille Alvide” a fascinating object of study is that it does not conform to the folktale motifs of female sexual subjugation and the anthropomorphized animal predator, even as Hansen’s text was likely inspired, at least in part, by folklore.

“Lille Alvide”: Beyond a Romantic Reading

The adult author of children’s books with “national content” has what Kelen and Sundmark call “a somewhat [...] onerous duty—to justify the nation to its innocents on behalf of the departed. This typically amounts to the offering of convincing demonstrations of faith” (3). In context of the National Romantic and beyond, a key “demonstration of faith” in Norwegian children’s literature is the promise that exposure to Norwegian wilderness develops good character.¹² While nature in literature can be a site for promoting national norms, it can also “be a setting where established ideas of nation and culture are challenged” (Slettan 2013, 24). My reading of “Lille Alvide” will suggest that nature can serve as a setting where the nation is challenged, even as it is being built up.

Hansen’s “Lille Alvide” is just a few pages long and the plot is simple: Alvide and her siblings head into the woods for a day of hiking and berry picking. When Alvide is alone, she encounters a bear. Alvide survives the encounter and returns home safely with her siblings. The story ends with the killing of the bear. Scholarship on “Lille Alvide” is limited. Those who have interpreted the text, which has as its epigraph a short religious poem about a “lille Engel” [little angel]—a

⁹ See Berg (2011, 11–70).

¹⁰ See Zipes (1993, 17–88).

¹¹ One Norwegian example is Elise Fagerli’s *Ulvehunger* (1995; *Wolf Hunger*), in which Red Riding Hood goes into the woods, consumes the cake and wine meant for her grandmother, and then eats the wolf that threatens her. When she returns home to her mother, she lets out a loud burp.

¹² See Ørjasæter (2013).

parallel to Lille Alvilde—see the power of innocence as the story’s central motif. As Birkeland, Risa and Vold put it: “Barnet er reint og skuldlaust som en engel, og er derfor usårleg i møte med dei dyriske kreftene. Åndeleg uskuld vinn over fysisk styrke” (2018; 21) [The child is pure and innocent like an angel and is therefore invincible in the face of animal forces. Spiritual innocence wins over physical strength]. Scholars note that while “Lille Alvilde” keeps with the moralizing tone of earlier European children’s literature, it is decidedly modern in its use of everyday language and in its prioritization of the child characters’ perspectives. Below, I first expand on the basic Romantic reading of “Lille Alvilde.” I then challenge the reading of Alvilde as innocent. I finally argue that Alvilde and the bear share a subversive kinship.

“Lille Alvilde” opens with a scene of child self-governance. A band of happy siblings makes their way into the woods on a “venlig Sommermorgen” (Hansen [1829] 1974, 12) [friendly summer morning]. The children are each described by a single trait: “Frits anførte det glade Tog” (12) [Frits led the happy train]; he is followed by “lystige Luise” [the merry Luise], “skjelmske Thora” [the mischievous Thora], “alvorlige Jørgen” (12) [the serious Jørgen], and “viltre Anton” [the unruly Anton]. The motherly big sister, Sophie, holds the hand of the youngest, Alvilde, just four years old. “Men Alvilde var Dagens Dronning” (12) [But Alvilde was the Queen of the Day], the text says, designating the youngest, most innocent child as the protagonist. Strikingly, Alvilde is not called the day’s “princess” but its “queen,” foreshadowing the authority she shows later in the text. Assigning each child just one descriptor conjures the metaphor of the nation, in which individuals contribute different strengths to the whole. Collectively, the children here constitute the well-rounded adult, the mature nation.

It is Sunday, and as the children head for the forest, the sound of church bells both reinforces the text’s religious motifs and provides an aural link between the civilized world that the children are departing and the wild realm that they are about to enter. The forest in Hansen’s text can be understood as what Northrop Frye has called the “green world” in his analysis of Shakespeare’s comedies—that is, a space where the standards governing social and emotional experience are suspended, where young people test limits, and from which they emerge more mature (Frye 1957). Once in the woods, the siblings share a snack of milk and cake, with Sophie making sure each gets their share. This happy perversion of the Eucharist has a distinctly Scandinavian flare (echoed, for example, in the strawberries-and-milk communion scene in Ingmar Bergman’s *Det sjunde inseglet* (1957; *The Seventh Seal*)), as well as pagan elements: this is a church made not of lumber, but of trees.

Indeed, Hansen’s is not a generic *Bildungs* tale, but one heavily inflected with Norwegian nationalism. Perhaps most important in this regard is Hansen’s use of language. The dialogue in the text reflects how children spoke in early nineteenth century Norway (Hagemann 1965, 121): “Ogsaa jeg skal plukke mange, mange Blaabær, Du Sophie min, og mange Blomster og gjøre mange Krandsse” (Hansen [1829] 1974, 12) [I too am going to pick lots and lots of blueberries, my Sophie, and lots of flowers and make lots of flower crowns], says Alvilde to her sister. The simple diction, inefficient repetition, and informal address in this passage endure as

hallmarks of modern children's literature. "Lille Alvilde's" setting and plot are also decidedly Norwegian. Picking berries and making flower crowns are Scandinavian traditions, and Hansen uses the names of specific plants to emphasize a local geography: "det fine Lyng og de blaa Violer" (13) [the fine heather and blue violets], "den gule Malva og den blaa Tjæreblomst" (13) [the yellow mallow and the blue sticky catchfly]. The author's message seems to be clear: it is right for Norwegian children to spend time in Norwegian woods.

Not long after the children enter the woods, Alvilde drifts off to sleep and her siblings scatter to other parts of the forest. Here, the narrator addresses the child reader directly:

I maa gjerne gaa i Skoven om Sommeren, kjære Børn, og plukke Bær og Blomster. Men ikke i alle Skove er det godt at gaa. I de tyke, mørke Furuskove findes undertiden Bjørnen, et vildt og farligt Dyr, som I Allesammen kjende af Billedbogen. (15)

(You may well go into the woods in summertime, dear children, and pluck berries and flowers. But it is not safe to go in all forests. In the thick, dark pine forests there is sometimes found a bear, a wild and dangerous animal, which you all know from your picturebook(s).)

Suddenly, the adult and civilized worlds, marked by the narrator's interjection, intrude on the child perspective and on the wilderness. Good Norwegian children, it turns out, must balance a love of nature with a fear of its perils. The narrator names the picturebook as the child's tool for recognizing and avoiding these perils. Remarkably, Alvilde makes reference to this knowledge in her encounter with the bear. Upon waking, Alvilde hears a rustling in the bushes and a bear appears. She is frightened at first, but finally utters, "Du gjør Mig ikke Noget, Bjørn! [...] for jeg er en snil Pige! Jeg kjender Dig nok af Billedbogen min" (15) [You cannot do anything to me, Bear, for I am a nice girl! I know you well enough from my picturebook]. Alvilde's response is not one of fight or flight. Rather, she invokes her character ("snil"), femininity ("Pige"), and knowledge ("Billedbogen") in arguing the bear cannot hurt her. Apparently, it is not Alvilde's innocence that will keep her from harm, but her education, or, per the Scandinavian, her *utdanning*. Notably, the term *utdanning* has as its root the verb *å danne*—to form or create—implicating the work of adults in shaping the child.¹³

From this analysis, one could conclude that although Alvilde is not entirely innocent, her response to the bear is hardly subversive. In fact, one might argue that Alvilde does exactly what she should in light of the national project: she tempers the wilderness with her culture and her *utdanning*. I will briefly flesh out this line of thinking.

It would seem that the adult, nationalistic project in "Lille Alvilde" is to teach children about *nature* through *books*, to give children *independence* so that they will eventually *conform*. This is precisely the kind of paradox in children's literature that Jacqueline Rose finds troubling. Rose might also point out that the text's combination of accessibility (familiar language) and authority (the friendly yet

¹³ This is in keeping with John Locke's influential notion of the child's mind as a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) that must be "filled in" via proper guidance and education. See Locke ([1693] 1970).

commanding narrator) likely make it compelling for a child audience. Moreover, in the case of “Lille Alvide” in nineteenth century Norway, the child is likely reading with or being read to by an adult who shares the text’s agenda, thus allowing the author, narrator, and parent to work together in “manipulating” the child. More troubling still, one might say, the narrator’s direct address to the reader establishes the text as that which both exposes and counters danger, rendering the text a closed system that the child both fears and requires. This is the double bind into which children are born: forced into systems (cultural, legal, textual) that they have not helped to construct and in which they lack power, children must assimilate in order to survive.

In *Our Children and Other Animals* (2014), Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart see children and animals as inscribed together in such a Foucauldian-style control system. Children, they argue, are taught a set of practices by which to instrumentalize animals, even as they themselves are instrumentalized in a broader social scheme. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, Amy Ratelle argues that children’s literature is an important tool by which children learn about animal instrumentalization, as they are “asked both implicitly and explicitly to identify with animals, but then to position themselves as distinctly human through the mode of their interactions with both lived animals and those depicted in literature and film” (2015, 10). For Cole, Stewart, and Ratelle, the child is given this confounding task: relate to the animal so that you can tame it, dominate it, transcend it. The child must work *through* the animal to become an adult, to become fully human, to become a citizen. To put it in the terms of Hansen’s *Godmand*, the animal is “til nytte” (of use) in the child’s process of growing up.

Reading “Lille Alvide” within this frame, one could interpret the human child as undergoing a rite of passage to assert her dominance over the animal other. Not only does Alvide seem to subdue the wild bear, she ultimately places a ring of flowers around the bear’s neck (perhaps a kind of collar) and a flower crown on its head. The latter is a common accessory on *syttende mai* (the seventeenth of May), Norwegian Constitution Day. In this respect, the child not only *tames* but *colonizes* the bear, much as this text, Rose might suggest, colonizes its readers.

I want to complicate this reading of child-animal instrumentalization on two fronts. First, I argue that Alvide is represented not (only) as a figure of innocence, but as a figure of power. In facing the bear, Alvide is neither meek (the angel of the epigraph) nor violent (which, the text says, her brother Anton would be (Hansen [1829] 1974, 15)). Rather, she is assertive and resourceful. This fact makes the killing of the bear at the story’s end seem excessive: why should the animal be killed if the child survived the encounter on her own? In the Grimms’s version of “Little Red Riding Hood,” a hunter—the story’s “hero” and symbol of “male governance” (Zipes 1993, 81)—saves Red Riding Hood from the wolf. In “Lille Alvide,” no such salvation is required. Though the text does not say who kills the bear, it is hinted that Alvide’s father may be responsible as the text’s final sentence, which tells the reader the bear has been shot, directly follows the sentence describing the father’s prayerful contemplation of Alvide’s survival. It is no great leap to understand this father (or other hunter) as a stand-in for national and patriarchal order. I argue that Alvide’s surviving the bear defies and threatens that order and that the killing of the

bear can be read as an attempt to reclaim power and to restore a hierarchy in which men are rulers and protectors, children are innocents, and wilderness is to be kept at some distance.

Second, and more subversively, I argue it is not just that Alvilde presents a challenge to the patriarchal and national order, but that she does so in partnership with the bear. For Stewart and Cole, children and animals occupy a shared position of oppression that has the potential to produce child-animal alliances. What should happen if these two “less governable” subjects (Stewart and Cole 2014, 38) were to join forces? What if the child, rather than instrumentalizing the animal as she is ostensibly taught to do, were to collaborate with the animal? What kind of order, what kind of nation might thus be forged? Drawing on the work of Donna Haraway, I argue Alvilde’s animal encounter has implications for bear, child, and nation.

Lille Alvilde in the Contact Zone

In *When Species Meet* (2008), the feminist and posthumanist philosopher Donna Haraway thinks of interspecies encounters as occurring in a “contact zone.” Haraway borrows the concept of “contact zones” from Mary Louise Pratt, who coined the phrase in describing “the improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination” (Pratt quoted in Haraway 2008, 216). Though Haraway’s interpretation of Pratt’s concept is my focus, Pratt’s original notion is also relevant to my argument as I suggest Hansen’s text complicates the ostensible roles of colonizer and colonized for the child (i.e., citizen-in-waiting) and bear (i.e., wild subject to be tamed), respectively. For Haraway, contact zones are spaces in which subjects not only meet but get caught in “world-making entanglements” (2008, 4). They are sites of intersection for the physical and the conceptual, the “biological and literary” (4). “Figures,” for Haraway, are not individuals but “material-semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings co-shape one another” (4). Such figures may be constituted in a single body or in multiple bodies, in the exchanges that occur across bodies, and in encounter itself—what Haraway calls “unpredictable kinds of ‘we’” (5). Drawing on Haraway’s concepts of regard, training, and play I argue that Alvilde’s encounter with the bear unfolds in a Harawayian contact zone.

For Haraway, regard has to do with looking and looking back, with seeing and being seen. It also has to do with mutual respect, as in: to hold another in high regard. In their interpretations of Alvilde’s encounter with the bear, scholars have not recognized a scene of mutuality and exchange. For example, in her human-centric reading of the encounter, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer asserts that the child “is not afraid of wild animals, which become tame and friendly toward her” (2008, 191). Not only does this reading dismiss the subjectivity of the bear, it is not an accurate assessment of the affective interspecies dynamics represented in Hansen’s text. When Lille Alvilde first sees the bear, she is petrified with fear: “først vilde hun skrige; men de klare Taarer stode stille i hendes Øjne, og det lille Hjerte hoppede af Angest, og hun kunde ikke faa en Lyd frem” (Hansen [1829] 1974, 15) [at first she wanted to scream, but the clear tears stood still in her eyes, and her

little heart jumped in dread, and she could not make a sound]. After the child's initial paralysis, Alvilde and the bear engage in a series of gestures and touches, words and grumbles, approaches and retreats—what Haraway calls an interspecies “dance” (2008, 17)—as they work towards a position of mutual regard.

When Alvilde's voice returns to her, she delivers the first of two “snil Pige” speeches (referenced above). She then gives the bear her basket of blueberries as a peace offering; the bear knocks it to the ground and gobbles up the fruit. The bear then sniffs the girl—a gesture even young child readers would likely recognize as the animal's getting-to-know-you behavior. This scene then repeats, with slight variation: Alvilde says, “Kjære søde Bjørn! Du maa ikke gjøre Mig Noget for jeg er jo snil Pige!” (Hansen [1829] 1974, 15) [Dear, sweet bear! You must not do anything to me for I am a nice girl!]. Again she gives the bear a basket of berries, and again the bear throws it to the ground and eats the fruit. Alvilde's use of the words “dear, sweet bear” in the second instance may be read as hopeless pleading, though it may also be understood as a softening of tone. Indeed, Alvilde is “ikke længere saameget bange” (15) [no longer so afraid] after this second exchange. That the exchange essentially repeats itself is striking: girl and bear seem to be rehearsing something; they appear to be learning *how* to communicate even *as* they communicate. This kind of repetition, which feels purposeful but whose stakes are unclear, evokes Haraway's idea of training. For Haraway, whose key example is agility training with her dog, animal training is about building mutual awareness, trust, and skill. While training “requires calculation, method, [and] discipline,” it can produce “something unexpected, something new and free, something outside the rules of function and calculation” (Haraway 2008, 223). Importantly, it is a two-way street: animal and human train *each other*. What if Alvilde is not *taming*, but *training*—and *being trained*?

Alvilde's training of the bear continues as she warns it not to eat up all the berries (“du faaer Ondt i Maven” (Hansen [1829] 1974, 15) [you will get a stomachache]). At one point, she tries to push the bear away from her, but the bear responds with tenderness: “Det store Dyr satte sine mørkeblaae Øyne venlig paa den lille Pige og strøg atter sin Lab over hende” (16) [The large animal set its dark blue eyes in a friendly way on the little girl and stroke its paw over her]. This line is significant: the bear's eyes—its regard for the child—are emphasized, as is the bear's touch. For Haraway, seeing and touching, the visual and the haptic, get bound up in the contact zone: “Touch, regard, looking back, becoming with—all these make us responsible in unpredictable ways for which worlds take shape” (2008, 36). Alvilde responds to the bear's regard by placing the crown of flowers on its head. In return, she asks the bear to leave the remaining berries for her siblings. And so, it is a favor, but it is also a crowning. If Lille Alvilde is “Dagens Dronning,” perhaps the bear is its king.

What would happen in a country where a girl is queen and a bear is king? (Or, for that matter, co-queen or co-ruler? Hansen's text leaves the bear ungendered.) This is a playful proposition. And a queer one. Haraway writes:

A proposition is about something that is not yet. A proposition is a social adventure, lured by unrealized ideals [...] and enabled by [...] the risk of play. This is queer theory, indeed, outside

reproductive teleology and off-category— that is, off-topic, out of topos (proper place), into tropos (swerving and so making meaning new). (Haraway 2008, 244–45)

For Haraway, interspecies encounters are queer for how they defy patrilineal, heteronormative, and—not least—human-centric relations. The space of interspecies play puts pleasure before progress and creative meaning making before reproduction. The love between a woman and her dog will never reproduce either species; the partnership between a girl and a bear cannot reproduce the Norwegian nation—or certainly, not as planned. *Bjørn* (bear) and *børn* (children): the linguistic elision is playfully suggestive of the interspecies kinship.

Queer Interspecies Kinship and “Lille Alvilde’s” Legacy

Hansen’s text contains a model of what I call queer interspecies kinship—a concept that is clearly indebted to Haraway, including her notion of “significant otherness.”¹⁴ I argue this kinship poses a threat and potential radical alternative to the national narrative otherwise laid out in the text. Girl and bear might rule over what Kelen and Sundmark call a “nation of childhood”—a possible nation that exists in story, and perhaps in the imaginations and lived futures of child readers. As Kelen and Sundmark point out, nations need laws; while laws become “natural” for adults, they are not (yet) so for children who can cast doubt on adult “common sense” (2013, 269-70). In texts where the national logic is being built up, children both within and outside of the text are provoked to imagine novel ways of governing—themselves, others, Nature, and states. The queer kinship between Alvilde and the bear casts doubt on the “common sense” of the instrumentalization of animals, of *utdanning*, and of the nation.

Due to a lack of evidence, it is only possible to speculate on the early reception of “Lille Alvilde” among child readers. Drawing on theoretical work in the field of children’s literature, as well as historical evidence, I will suggest that early nineteenth century Norwegian child readers may well have read against the grain of the text’s national agenda. Marah Gubar argues that child readers can act as “artful dodgers,” evading the adult agenda and “propaganda” (2009, 71) in a children’s text. Of course, even when a child is not intentional about rejecting or troubling a text’s agenda, she may well overlook it, ignore it, or distort it. Strikingly, this is a point made by Vilhelmine Ullmann in describing her reading experiences as a child in early nineteenth century Norway: “De Voksne ved ikke hvordan Barn kan abstrahere, ta til sig det som passer dem og lade det Øvrige staa” (Hagemann 1965, 48) [Adults don’t know what children might abstract [from the text], taking what suits them and leaving the rest]. This reflection is all the more interesting in light of the fact that Ullmann attests to having read Hansen’s texts as a child (48): one wonders what she “abstracted” from these. Taking the argument that children may

¹⁴ In “The Companion Species Manifesto,” “significant otherness” refers to the importance and intimacy on the one hand, and to the strangeness and queerness on the other, of the author’s partnership with her dog. Though Alvilde and the bear are less bound up “in the flesh” (Haraway 2016b, 94), their relationship, like that of Haraway and her dog, defies historical, cultural, and “natural” definitions per my reading.

interpret texts in unintended ways a step further, Clémentine Beauvais claims that the adult author of children's texts may "wish" for exactly that. Because the adult author knows that the child reader will outlive him, Beauvais argues, texts for children reflect the "paradoxical adult desire to ask the child didactically for an unpredictable future" (2015, 4). The adult author *needs* the child reader to live into a future about which he may be hopeful but over which he has limited control. In this sense, the author and child reader can be understood as collaborators in constructing a text's meaning and in living out its impact. Clearly, the author's "wish" for an unpredictable future and the notion of child-author collaboration have special implications in context of national children's literature and nation building: the future of the nation, desired but unknowable, is at stake.

Though the metaphor has its limits, there is a way in which "Lille Alvilde," through its iconic status as first in its field, is the child of Norwegian children's literature. In addition to what I have claimed is a queer relationship at the center of this narrative, Hansen's text itself, I argue, can be understood as a kind of queer child in the sense that Kathryn Bond Stockton describes. Per my discussion in the dissertation's introduction, the child, for Stockton, is a queer figure for how it defies adult norms of sexuality and adult expectations of linear development. The child's sexuality is queered by the paradoxical adult position in which the adult simultaneously expects the child to be innocent (that is, nonsexual) while developing steadily towards a position of (straight) mature sexuality. Because the child can only ever be "not-yet-straight" (Stockton 2009, 27) the child's relations that are, or that approach, the sexual are "lateral"—that is, invested in pleasure and "sideways growth" rather than in production (linear development) or reproduction.¹⁵ What is true for sexuality is also true for species: "lateral" relationships between children and animals (such as the one between Alvilde and the bear) call into question the inevitability of human adulthood as the child's developmental destination. I read "Lille Alvilde" as a not-yet-straight (that is, not-yet-codified) children's text: it is indeterminate, relatively unbound, a species (i.e., genre) that is far from mature—and thus not yet domesticated. The queerness of the original "Lille Alvilde" becomes all the more distinctive in tracking its publication history since 1829. Various versions of Hansen's text have been printed in children's periodicals and school readers since then. "Lille Alvilde" was published in the first volume of *Billed-Magazin for Børn* in January 1838. This version is the same as the original, except that it excludes the narrator's interjection warning children not to venture too deeply into the woods. Later printings of the story, such as the one in the 1963 school reader *Barndomslandet*, exclude both the narrator's interjection and the killing of the bear at the end (Hansen 1963). These exclusions, I argue, make the text less subversive by obscuring or erasing the patriarchal figures (narrator, father/hunter) whose presence highlights the queerness of Alvilde's interspecies

¹⁵ I interpret Hansen's text as an example of Stockton's "innocent child," that is, the child that will be "normal" but who is queered away from adulthood by their innocence/not-yet-straightness.

kinship with the bear.¹⁶ Without the excess of the ending, the story is stripped of its contradictions and is more easily assimilated or ignored.

In addition to the many reprintings of “Lille Alvilde,” a number of texts have appeared in Norwegian children’s periodicals and readers that appear to be influenced by Hansen’s original, which I consider to be part of “Lille Alvilde’s” legacy. The story “Bjørnen” (The Bear), published in *Nordisk illustreret Børneblad* (Nordic Illustrated Children’s Magazine) in 1873 depicts an encounter between a girl, Astrid, and a bear. Though “Bjørnen” contains some of the kinship elements of “Lille Alvilde”—Astrid removes a thorn from the bear’s paw, the bear rests its paw on her shoulder—it is more explicit about Astrid’s Christianity (she carries a catechism and prays to God) and, in the end, her relationship with the bear is largely transactional: in their second encounter, the bear spares the cows of Astrid’s herd in return for her earlier favor, and the bear’s facial expression suggests “nu er vi kvit” (“Bjørnen” 1873, 3) [now we are finished]. “Marit Spillerbakken og Bjørnen” (Marit Spillerbakken and the Bear) was printed in the same periodical in 1874. In this story, a bear grabs one of Marit’s sheep; Marit calls the bear ugly and threatens to kill it. The bear releases Marit’s lamb but only, the text says, because it sensed a greater power protecting the “uskyldige” (Ullmann 1874, 11) [innocents]. Here, the interspecies kinship elements are entirely gone and the Christian message is heavy-handed. (Notably, this text was written by Vilhelmine Ullmann.) In “Bjørne-graven” (The Bear Pit) in *Læsebog for folkeskolen* (1906; Reader for The Public School), a little girl falls into a bear pit at the zoo. Her father swiftly rescues her and all is well. In this turn-of-the-century tale, the wild animal is caged and the father has returned as hero.¹⁷

Contemporary Scandinavian picturebooks continue the “Lille Alvilde” legacy. Åse Marie Ommundsen suggests that the Swedish picturebook *Gittan och gråvargarna* (Lindenbaum 2000; *Bridget and the Grey Wolves*), in which a little girl leaves the *barnehage* (kindergarten/daycare) and plays with some wolves in the woods, is a kind of modern-day “Lille Alvilde.”¹⁸ However, I read Gitte, with her red sweatshirt, as a version of Red Riding Hood: she tames the wolves, even acts as their mother figure, and the wolves are heavily anthropomorphized. When Gitte is done playing, she happily returns to the *barnehage*. In a recent Norwegian picturebook, *Kunsten å møte en bjørn* (Otterlei and Moursund 2015; *The Art of Meeting a Bear*), there is no real bear at all: the “bear” is a bully at the *barnehage*, and the boy who is being bullied gets support from various caring adults before successfully standing

¹⁶ Versions of “Lille Alvilde” printed in *Norsk Idylkrands* (Hansen 1831) and *Læsebog til Brug for vore Skolers nederste og mellemste Classer* (Hansen 1855) retain the narrator’s interjection and the killing of the bear.

¹⁷ Though not a Norwegian example, it is worth mentioning the Swedish poet and composer Alice Tegnér’s popular children’s song “Mors lilla Olle” (1895) in context of the legacy of “Lille Alvilde.” “Mors lilla Olle” tells the story of a little boy who, mistaking a bear for a dog, feeds the bear his blueberries. The song is based on the poem “Stark i sin oskuld” (1851; Strong in His Innocence) by Wilhelm von Braun, which itself is based on a real boy-bear encounter in Sweden that was reported in a Norwegian newspaper (Dahlström, n.d.). The example speaks to the way in which fiction and history are bound up in a process of canonizing the child-bear figuration.

¹⁸ See footnote 46 in Ommundsen (2018).

up to his adversary. The forest in this text—evoked in illustrations throughout the book—is just a metaphor: the children never leave the safety of the kindergarten.

The legacy of “Lille Alvide” is one in which the girl-bear relationship generally becomes less queer with time. The most obvious explanation for this shift would seem to be the rise of urbanization and the welfare state, the institutionalization of childcare and schooling, and an increasingly strict enforcement of the divide between wilderness and civilization, between the animal and the human. And yet, one might expect Hansen’s text, invested as it is in nation building, to likewise enforce these divides. As my reading suggests, however, “Lille Alvide” is interested in transcending human-animal barriers and is ambivalent about the nation’s relationship to wilderness. This ambivalence is only reinforced by the text’s ending. Soon after Alvide “crowns” the bear, she is reunited with her siblings and they return home. The text’s final sentence is this: “Langt ude paa Høsten blev den store, mørkebrune Bjørn skudt; og om dens Hals sad endnu Alvildes Krands” (Hansen 1974, 16) [Late in the fall, the large dark brown bear was shot; Alvide’s ring of flowers still sat around its neck]. This last line simultaneously denies (via death) and invokes (via reminder) the bear and its relationship to the child. According to the logic of conventional readings of “Lille Alvide,” the ending is a happy one: the threat to the child has been eliminated. In my reading, the tone is somber—even tragic: the animal’s death is abrupt and heartless; the trace of interspecies kinship evokes a sense of loss.

Hansen’s story from 1829 marks the initiation of a canon: Norwegian children’s literature. While one might expect a coercive stance in a national children’s text in a moment of historical high stakes, what I find instead is ambivalence and openness with regard to the child, the animal, and the future of the Norwegian nation. This openness and ambivalence is part-and-parcel of what Clémentine Beauvais calls the children’s author’s “wish” for an unpredictable future. This wish cannot only be understood as hope; the possibility of any future, including a national future, comes with significant risks—including the risk of failure. What this section suggests is that the stakes in “Lille Alvide” are, in fact, largely retrospectively imposed as part of a developmental historical narrative that naturalizes Norway’s success as a nation. Per that teleological narrative, Norway “grew up;” so too did its canon of children’s texts. This section has aimed to denaturalize that narrative by drawing on queer theory in two ways: Haraway’s interspecies model illuminates the girl-bear relationship at the heart of the story while Stockton presents a model for backwards-looking that is open to contingency and to the non-inevitable potential of the figure of child—whether Alvide, the early children’s text, or the young nation. In the following section, I consider how this contingency applies to a national children’s text that emerged at a different point of “development” for the Swedish nation.

Queer Delay and the Animal in Sweden’s National Text for Children

In the previous section I argued that the queer interspecies kinship in Maurits Hansen’s “Lille Alvide” poses a challenge to the (re)production of the Norwegian nation. In this section I examine a classic of Swedish children’s literature, Selma

Lagerlöf's *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige* (1906–07; *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* [1907] and *Further Adventures of Nils* [1911]).¹⁹ While “Lille Alvide” is associated with a nation’s origins and beginnings, *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* marks a kind of “midlife crisis” within the national developmental narrative. Here I argue that the child-animal figuration facilitates, but also complicates, a cohesive vision of Sweden for the twentieth century.

Nils in Context: Sweden at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

By the time the first volume of *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* was published in 1906, Sweden’s run as an imperial power during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (*Stormaktstiden*) was clearly finished. In 1809 Sweden lost Finland to Russia and in 1905 Sweden lost control of Norway in a peaceful dissolution of a union created in 1814 as a result of the Napoleonic Wars. This shift brought about independence for Norway but constituted a “national trauma” for Sweden (Sundmark 2008, 176). In fact, the dissolution of Sweden-Norway (*unionsupplösningen*) created the sense that Sweden had to “catch up” with Norway, which had by that time been engaged in decades of nation building efforts. Sweden’s territorial losses, as well as industrialization, urbanization, and major emigration to the United States, deeply challenged Swedish national identity.

Given Sweden’s decline in international stature over the course of the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that the New Romantic authors of the 1890s looked to Sweden’s folk culture and distant past for inspiration. Perhaps the most prominent of these authors, Selma Lagerlöf was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for literature in 1909. Lagerlöf was a master of intertwining the mythic and the everyday, the supernatural and the real in her fiction. Her work is marked by patriotism and optimism on the one hand and by nostalgia for a dying way of life (including her place in the aristocracy) on the other. In addition to *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, Lagerlöf is best known for her 1891 novel, *Gösta Berlings Saga* (*The Story of Gösta Berling*), a historical epic set in Sweden’s countryside. Notably, Lagerlöf was a lesbian, as was revealed—via her personal letters—well after her death. Though I do not address this fact directly in my argument, it is not insignificant for the way I engage queerness: *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* can be understood not only as a critical contribution to the Swedish nation but also as a non-biological mode of reproducing it. Literary production as national reproduction is highlighted in a scene I examine below, in which the queer author and the queer child figure collaborate.

Also critical for understanding the historical and cultural context of *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* is the publication of Ellen Key’s *Barnets Århundrade* (*The Century of the Child*) in 1900. Key was a Swedish teacher and feminist who argued for a child-centric approach to education and child rearing. Her work strongly influenced the rise of children’s rights movements and the shift away from rote schooling in the twentieth century. Lagerlöf admired Key’s philosophies and was a teacher herself before becoming a fulltime author. When a new textbook was

¹⁹ I refer to the translated volumes together as *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*.

commissioned by the Swedish Board of Education at the turn of the century, Lagerlöf answered the call with *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*. The book is part geography text, part *Bildungsroman*, and part fantasy novel. In the story, Nils is magically transformed into an elf. He befriends a flock of wild geese and travels the entire Swedish nation on gooseback. Complementing his journey by air are his visits to many places on the ground, where Nils learns about local history and culture. Scholars have made much of these dual perspectives—one from above and an “embedded” perspective from below.²⁰ Bjørn Sundmark argues this approach allows Lagerlöf to incorporate a sprawling and diverse Swedish nation, thus prefiguring the concept of the Swedish *folkhem* (people’s home) that would emerge in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a metaphor for mutual responsibility and care in the Swedish welfare state (2008, 168).

The child-animal figuration is critical in Lagerlöf’s model of the nation. Not only do animals offer the mode of transportation that allows Nils to conceptualize Sweden as a nation, they also teach Nils important moral lessons as he is transformed from lazy, naughty boy to caring young man. In other words, animals are the key to Lagerlöf’s text fulfilling its dual pedagogical aims: the text teaches children about the map and history of Sweden while also teaching them how to be good Swedish citizens. In this respect, *Nils* would appear to be an example of Ratelle’s model, in which animals are of use to the child in becoming adult, human, and citizen. However, Lagerlöf’s text evokes a range of queer possibilities that I argue complicate the national and developmental projects in *Nils*, even as these are ultimately upheld. Below I argue that childhood delay, facilitated by the animal, is in this text extended well beyond what is “necessary” for the child to mature properly. I further argue that both animals and children in Lagerlöf’s text are granted agency in ways that challenge the primacy of the adult human subject. Throughout, I consider how these arguments have implications for the child reader of Lagerlöf’s text.

Queer Species and Excessive Delay in *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*

The first chapter of Lagerlöf’s text, “Pojken” (“The Boy”), introduces the reader to the text’s protagonist. Nils is fourteen years old, blond, and gangly. He is the only child of peasant farmers on the outskirts of Skåne, the southernmost region of Sweden. Nils is indolent and mischievous. In particular, he is mean to animals, and thus fails to “use” the animal properly to learn responsibility and compassion, as the normative model of development suggested by Locke, and interpreted by Ratelle, requires. The story begins on a Sunday. Nils falls asleep reading the Bible and when he wakes, he sees an elf across the room via a mirror. The tropes of the mirror and the just-woken state usher in the fantastic mode that will complement the realistic depiction of Sweden’s geography throughout the text. Nils attempts to capture the elf, who then punishes Nils by turning the boy himself into an elf. Upon realizing he has been transformed (furniture appears giant, the text of the Bible is too large to

²⁰ In his dissertation, Christopher Oscarson argues Nils “must mediate competing tendencies of overview and embeddedness” in assessing Sweden from above and on the ground (2006, 156).

read), Nils comes across the farm animals he used to tease, and they take vengeance. The animals attack Nils physically and taunt him with the name “Tummetott” [Thumbietot]. Remarkably, Nils can understand their language. Nils realizes, “Han var inte en människa mer, utan ett vidunder” (Lagerlöf 1906, 20) [“He was no longer a human being—but a freak” (Lagerlöf 1907b, 25)].

The consequences of his altered state become clearer as Nils reflects on his situation. Importantly, what is at stake are the very things he would stand to inherit by passing from boyhood to manhood, from childhood to citizenship:

Han började så småningom begripa vad det hade att betyda, att han inte mer var någon människa. Han var skild från allting nu: inte kunde han leka med andra pojkar, inte kunde han överta torpet efter föräldrarna, och rakt inte kunde han få någon tös at gifta sig med. (Lagerlöf 1906, 20)

Little by little he began to comprehend what it meant—to be no longer human. He was separated from everything now; he could no longer play with other boys, he could not take charge of the farm after his parents were gone; and certainly no girl would think of marrying him. (Lagerlöf 1907b, 25)

In this passage, the problem of queerness—of failing to be socialized as a boy, of failing to marry a girl—is explicitly connected to the problem of being nonhuman, of being a “freak.” To be a boy elf in Lagerlöf’s text is to be stuck in childhood delay; it is also to be a queer species. Indeed, rendering the child as an elf literalizes the problem of the child as not-quite-human.

The child figure may be understood as not-quite-human—a question of species—but also as not-yet-human—a question of time. Though Nils is ultimately restored to human form—a necessary outcome for a pedagogical text concerned with the growth of the citizen and the continuation of the nation—his path to that destination is anything but “straight.” Here I consider how queerness of species and queerness of time intersect in Lagerlöf’s text. In many respects, the function of time in *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* conforms to Western temporal concepts that privilege linearity, progress, and the calendar. For example, the chapters in *Nils* are dated—starting on March twentieth and ending on November ninth—and reflect a realistic timeframe for the wild geese’s (and Nils’s) migration from the south of Sweden to Lapland and back again. Calendar time is a subset of what Elizabeth Freeman calls *chrononormativity*, which she associates with “causality, sequence, [and] forward-moving agency” (2010, 64). Chrononormative time is strongly aligned with heteronormative reproduction and “genealogies of descent” (xxii), which shape not only families, but entire nations (where inheritance is both biological and cultural). Because chrononormativity relies on reproduction, it “harnesses not only sequence but also cycle [...] for the idea of time as cyclical stabilizes its forward movement, promising renewal rather than rupture” (5).²¹ Cyclical time is present in Lagerlöf’s text in the south-north-south migratory loop of the wild geese, in the changing of seasons, and in the corresponding narrative of Nils

²¹ Freeman associates cyclical time with Dana Luciano’s term *chronobiopolitics*, or “‘the sexual arrangement of the time of life’ of entire populations” (2010, 3).

having come “full circle” by story’s end. Though necessary to the text’s nation building project, I ultimately argue this formula is *nearly* broken, which, to invert Freeman’s expression above, may provoke *rupture* rather than *renewal*.

In the introduction to this dissertation, I invoked Kathryn Bond Stockton’s notion of “managed delay” in bringing up the (straight) child (2009, 40). Some delay, suggests Stockton, is desirable in normative childhood development. However, delay—most often imagined as a period of innocence and open-endedness—must be managed by adults so that the child progresses towards heteronormative maturity. Excessive delay threatens this progress and can thus be understood as queer. I argue that Lagerlöf’s text embodies excessive delay. This is apparent in the text’s length, in its episodic structure, and in how it relates time to space—especially via the map. The first edition of *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* consists of two volumes containing around seven hundred pages and fifty-five chapters. Aside from the first chapter, in which Nils is transformed into an elf and joins the wild geese on their journey, and the final two chapters, in which Nils returns home and to human form, the text consists entirely of Nils’s adventures through Sweden. During his travels, Nils encounters farmers, miners, hunters, and lumberjacks; he visits forests and islands, castles and shipyards. Nils often learns about Swedish culture and history through extended anecdotes or legends told by one of the book’s characters, which completely deviate from the main narrative frame. The text’s logic is episodic. Theoretically, between the beginning and ending, the text could go on indefinitely—a decidedly non-chrononormative rendering of time and a fine analogy for the indeterminacy of childhood delay.

The text’s length can be partly explained by its pedagogical function: it takes time to visit and incorporate the many parts of the nation. Yet, as I have suggested, teaching Sweden’s geography is only part of the text’s job; the other part has to do with citizenship and character. Strikingly, the latter purpose is arguably achieved in a fraction of the book’s pages: by the book’s third chapter Nils has learned his lesson regarding kindness, by the sixth chapter he longs for home, and by the eighth chapter the wild geese—the book’s moral standard-bearers—have embraced him. Aside from filling in the map, why prolong the text? What happens when the protagonist has learned his lessons with nearly six hundred pages left to go? One possible answer to this question is that the reader will get absorbed in the fantasy and lose sight of the text’s “lessons.” In fact, this was a complaint of some Swedish teachers, who felt *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* encouraged children to daydream, distracting them from learning (Edström 1996, 58). Some teachers also complained that the text was too long (i.e., too many “episodes”)—a critique Lagerlöf responded to by shortening the 1921 edition by about one third (Edström 1996, 57).²²

In addition to the text’s length and episodic structure, the map of Sweden has queer implications for childhood and national development in Lagerlöf’s text. Various editions of *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* include a map that charts Nils’s travels on gooseback. Perhaps the most recognizable of these is found in multiple Bonniers editions (Figure 3). The route of the geese shown on these maps can be

²² More recent editions have returned to the longer format.

understood as chrononormative: it charts steady progress along a circular, migratory path. What the maps do not reflect, however, is the fact that Nils and the geese spend a disproportionate amount of time in Skåne, such that the narrative time dedicated to the various parts of Sweden is not equally distributed.²³ The charted course on the map does not reflect how long Nils and the geese stay in one location, denying any sense of delay. The temporal illustration thus disavows the lingering, the fattening up of the timeline, that the narrative entails.

Figure 3
Map from the 1957 Bonnier edition (see also Sundmark 2008, 178)



Sundmark points to another striking aspect of the map in *Nils*: Sweden is pictured alone; its neighbors are “blotted out” (2008, 175–76).²⁴ As Sundmark suggests, picturing Sweden in isolation was important at a time when Sweden was recovering from the losses of Finland and Norway and reconstituting its national identity (175–76). Interestingly, in 1904, just before the dissolution of Sweden’s

²³ Sundmark suggests this was part of Lagerlöf’s strategy to highlight the less culturally prominent but economically important region of Skåne (2008, 177).

²⁴ In some Swedish and international editions, neighboring countries are labeled but not drawn in, or drawn in but “empty.”

union with Norway in 1905, Selma Lagerlöf drafted a chapter about Norway for *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* (Lagerroth 2018). The chapter figures the geological history and, less directly, the political history of Sweden and Norway by imagining the two countries as loaves of bread baked alongside one another: though separate “loaves,” they are always touching. Importantly, it is “Vår Herre” (Our Lord) who shapes the loaves (Lagerroth 2018). Both the biblical frame and the geological history allegorized in the chapter suggest the “brotherhood” between Norway and Sweden is natural, even inevitable. Of course, this turned out not to be the case, and the Norway chapter never appeared in *Nils*. The “natural” brother, Norway, is severed from Sweden; the loaves are torn apart. In the conclusion of this chapter, I suggest there is an echo of this severing when Nils is finally separated from the wild geese.

I want to consider a final aspect of the map, which will inform my discussion of the ending of *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*. Sundmark makes the important point that while Nils has no trouble crossing regional borders within Sweden (he moves from province to province with ease), he never leaves Sweden’s national borders (2008, 177). In fact, Lagerlöf’s text makes almost no mention of places outside of Sweden. Yet, from Nils’s perspective in the air, the visual continuity of the landscape threatens the logic of national boundaries.²⁵ Would Nils even know if he had crossed one? The mechanism that allows Nils to construct the national map of Sweden—that is, traveling by gooseback—is also the mechanism that would allow him to transgress its borders and to leave Sweden, even permanently. Nils comes close to doing exactly that.

With just a few dozen pages left in the book, and as the wild geese prepare to return Nils to his home in Skåne before continuing their journey south for the winter, Akka, the leader of the wild geese, offers Nils a trove of hidden treasure as compensation for his help during their journey. Nils insists that the lessons he has learned during his travels are worth more than any gold. Moreover, he feels as if he is being paid off: “det är ändå, som jag säger, att ni vill skilja mig från er, förrän jag själv har lust,” sade Tummetott. ‘Efter en så god tid, som vi har haft tillsammans, tycker jag, att det inte vore för mycket, att jag också finge fara med er till utlandet” (Lagerlöf 1907a, 431) [“it looks as if you wished to be rid of me before I wanted to go,” argued Thumbietot. ‘After all the good times we have had together, I think you ought to let me go abroad with you” (Lagerlöf 1911, 314)]. Akka considers Nils’s suggestion, but convinces the boy to return home, where his parents miss him terribly. Akka also compares Skåne favorably to “utlandet” [“abroad”] as Nils and the geese fly over Nils’s home province, which I read as an attempt to temper Nils’s wanderlust. When Nils arrives home he is seized with joy, and, as he stands at the threshold of his parents’ house, he is restored to human form. The book’s second-to-last chapter ends with his proclaiming, “jag är stor, jag är människa igen” (Lagerlöf 1907a, 483) “I’m a big boy. I’m a human being again” (Lagerlöf 1911, 335)]. Nils is no longer a “freak”: he now stands to inherit the farm, marry a girl, and become a citizen after all.

²⁵ One interesting exception is a long, human-made gap in the forest that constitutes part of Sweden’s border with Norway. Some version of this *grensegate* (border gate) has existed since 1751.

Yet, the book's final chapter reintroduces Nils's ambivalence. The day after his homecoming, Nils waits at sunrise to say goodbye to "his" wild geese, who have promised to visit before flying south. As Akka and her flock approach Nils, both parties realize they can no longer understand each other. Despite the new interspecies difference, Akka allows Nils to stroke her before the geese take off. As the geese depart, the text ends by saying, "pojken kände en sådan längtan efter de bortflyggande, att han nära nog önskade att återigen vara Tummetott, som kunde rida över land och hav med en vildgås flock" (Lagerlöf 1907a, 486) ["the boy felt such a yearning for his departing comrades that he almost wished he were Thumbietot again and could travel over land and sea with a flock of wild geese" (Lagerlöf 1911, 339)]. Lagerlöf's text thus ends with the idea of *rupture* rather than *renewal* of chrononormative time and of the *Bildungs* narrative. It also ends with longing: for childhood, for travel, for being with the animal in a state of indefinite delay.

Child Agency and More-Than-Anthropocentric Animals in *Nils*

The ambivalent ending of Lagerlöf's text has important implications for the child reader. It may leave her wondering what "wonderful adventures" Nils might have had if he kept traveling with the geese. By extension, it may invite the child reader to imagine her *own* travels abroad. As suggested above, the text's episodic structure and length may encourage the child reader to dwell in fantasy, while its final chapter stages the possibility of *not* growing up, of *not* becoming a national citizen, and instead, of traveling the world. I do not mean to suggest that this is the primary effect of Lagerlöf's text. In fact, one might argue the effect is just the opposite—namely, that the vicarious satisfaction of experiencing Nils's adventures through reading prevents the child from feeling a need to go on such adventures herself. Moreover, as I have suggested, Lagerlöf's text satisfies its *Bildungs* requirements: Nils returns home and is all but certain to help regenerate the Swedish nation as a man and a citizen. My argument, rather, is that the text puts pressure on this structure in important and surprising ways—in ways that one might not expect from the national children's text *par excellence*. In this regard, I have already pointed to the closing chapters of *Nils*, which I find to be open-ended (to this point, one can imagine an ending to Lagerlöf's text that emphasizes the comforts of home rather than the sadness of separation from the geese). Below I consider how the child and the animal are represented as sources of agency, wisdom, and power in *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, testing the foregone conclusion that nations need adult humans at the helm.

At many turns, Lagerlöf's narrative celebrates the autonomous, progressive, and agential child. Nils's agency is apparent in the fact that he goes on a long and treacherous journey without adult assistance. Two other children in the text, the sister and brother Åsa and Mats, undertake a similar journey: after their mother and siblings die of tuberculosis, they set out to find their father in the North of Sweden.²⁶ The examples of Nils, Åsa, and Mats suggest that real learning and growth happen

²⁶ Much *Nils* scholarship points to how Åsa and Mats's foot journey mirrors Nils's and the birds' migration, reinforcing the text's dual perspective of Sweden: from the sky and from the ground.

not under the supervision of adults, but through adventures in the real world, on children's own terms. Indeed, schools are rarely mentioned in *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, and then mostly as features of the landscape. It is striking that Sweden's nationally sanctioned school reader largely ignores the national institution of learning.

Perhaps the most important way in which the child operates as a source of wisdom and authority in *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* is with respect to the text's prescient ecological message. In one example, a group of children decide to replant trees that have been destroyed by a forest fire. The children know that their efforts will prevent soil erosion and that the trees they plant may one day be used to build houses and ships. On the one hand, the children here are portrayed as nation builders: the trees they plant will be used for human homes and industry. On the other hand, though Lagerlöf's text suggests that profitable industries and environmental protections can coexist, its poignant closing message may be understood as a call to *limit* nation building. At the end of their journey, Akka, the wild goose, says to Nils, "om du har lärt dig något gott hos oss, Tummetott, så kanske du inte tycker, att människorna bör vara ensamma på jorden" (Lagerlöf 1907a, 475) ["if you have learned anything from us at all, Thumbietot, you no longer think that the humans should have the whole earth to themselves" (Lagerlöf 1911, 322)]. The ultimate lesson, for Nils and for readers, is that nation building must be tempered by concern for the earth and its nonhuman inhabitants.

The tree-planting scene is also significant for how it portrays education. The parents of the children who want to plant trees are cynical at first and consider the idea child's play. However, their attitude changes when the parents observe their children at work:

Far stod en stund och tittade på, och så började han rycka upp ljung. Bara på lek liksom. Barnen voro läromästare, för de voro redan hemma i konsten, och de fingo visa far och mor hur de skulle bära sig åt. (Lagerlöf 1907a, 268)

The fathers and mothers stood for a moment and looked on; then they too began to pull up heather—just for the fun of it. The children were the instructors, for they were already trained, and had to show their elders what to do. (Lagerlöf 1911, 179)

The notion that the children "were already trained" is striking. Who trained them, if not their "elders?" It appears to be a few teachers and "ett par skogvaktare" (Lagerlöf 1907a, 266) ["a couple of foresters" (Lagerlöf 1911, 176)] who have encouraged the children's reforestation project. In keeping with the text's motif of the school as a feature of the landscape, the children and teachers use the school building not as a place for learning but as a meeting spot before heading into the woods. What Lagerlöf's text seems to suggest is that *some* adults (some teachers, some foresters) but not *most* (the majority of parents) are worthy instructors for children. This fits with Ellen Key's sense that few adults really understand how to care for children, including the idea that adults should offer guidance but should let children's interests lead the way. Here and elsewhere in the text, Lagerlöf downplays traditional institutions (the school, the family) and suggests that *certain* adults can relate to and draw out the child's potential. In *The Wonderful Adventures*

of *Nils*, these *certain* adults tend to be teachers, authors, and storytellers. I consider in greater depth the idea of the adult author's special connection to childhood in the next chapter of this dissertation, though in Lagerlöf's text, too, this idea is taken up directly.

When Lagerlöf was tapped for the Swedish textbook project, she was originally asked to be the editor of a collection that would bring together materials from contributors across Sweden (Sundmark 2008, 171). However, Lagerlöf insisted on writing the entire text herself—something I read as a bid for artistic control, but perhaps also as an indication that Lagerlöf saw herself as an adult with a special ability to reach children. (The unmitigated success of her text would suggest this is true.) Lagerlöf struggled to come up with a unifying concept for the text—a real-life predicament that is acknowledged in *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*. In the text's only direct address to the reader, which comes near the end of the second volume, the narrator says, “Nu får jag tala om hur märkvärdigt det föll sig” (Lagerlöf 1907a, 413) [“Now I must tell you of a strange coincidence” (Lagerlöf 1911, 294)]. The narrator proceeds to tell a story about “en människa, som gick och tänkte på att skriva en bok om Sverige, som skulle passa för barn att läsa i skolorna” (Lagerlöf 1907a, 413) [“a woman who thought of writing a book about Sweden, which would be suitable for children to read in the schools” (29 Lagerlöf 1911, 2944)]. This person, the narrator relates, struggled so much with how to write such a book that she nearly gave up. However, much to her fortune, a boy elf visited her one day and told her about his journey on gooseback through Sweden. Delighted, the woman recorded the boy elf's stories in a book. The implication, of course, is that *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* is that book.

I find this to be a remarkable scene for thinking about Lagerlöf's representation of child agency. Though it portrays the author as the mediator of Nils's story, thus arguably locating more power with the adult than with the child, the scene suggests that the composition of the pedagogical text relied on adult-child collaboration. This figuration is a version of Marah Gubar's notion of child-author collaboration (2009) as well as of Clémentine Beauvais's notion of the adult author's “wish” for an unpredictable future (2015), both of which I discussed in connection to “Lille Alvide.” In Lagerlöf's text, the child-author figuration might be understood as a model or metaphor for what the adult author of children's books ought to do—namely, to be a vehicle for the visions of the child. To do so may well be impossible: Jacqueline Rose and others would suggest that at best, the adult appropriates the child's feelings and stories. Still, I argue this scene illuminates the ideal of channeling the “might” of the child (Beauvais 2015), which, as Beauvais claims, motivates so much writing for children. In a text that invites the child reader to view the world through Nils's eyes, the adult author is given a privileged status. Additionally, the way *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* points in this scene to its own authorship may invite child readers to understand the text as constructed, and to understand themselves as potential authors.

Children in Lagerlöf's text are agential subjects. So too are animals. Most scholarship on *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* suggests that the many animals in Lagerlöf's texts can be read as stand-ins for human beings. As I will show, however, the function of animals in *Nils* is not strictly allegorical. Lagerlöf aimed to represent

Sweden's flora and fauna as faithfully as possible and did significant research to this end. For the author, writing a fictional text was not at odds with presenting accurate information about animal species to her child readers (Edström 1996, 57).²⁷ Lagerlöf's approach suggests that anthropomorphizing animals does not necessarily preclude a text from accurately representing many aspects of those animals' biology and behavior. Importantly, while Lagerlöf's depictions of animals are anthropomorphic, they are not necessarily anthropocentric—that is, while the author depicts animals with human traits (especially speech), these depictions very often decentralize or challenge a human perspective.

One way Lagerlöf achieves this is by portraying interspecies encounters that do not involve humans. A fine example is found in the chapter called, "Den stora trandansen på Kullaberg" ("The Great Crane Dance on Kullaberg"), in which many of Sweden's animals meet on the mountain of Kullaberg for their annual "lekmöte" (Lagerlöf 1906, 81) ["play-meeting" (Lagerlöf 1907b, 140)]. Lagerlöf describes the arrival of various groups of animals. First come the "fyrfotingarna" (Lagerlöf 1906, 81) ["four-footers" (Lagerlöf 1907b, 140)], who make the journey the night before so as not to be observed by humans. Then come the flocks of birds, casting giant shadows on the earth below. Various bird species are described in detail. The wood grouse has "ögonbrynen klart röda" ["bright red eyebrows"] and "bläste upp fjädrarna, sänkte vingarna och slog upp stjärten, så att de vita täckfjädrarna syntes" (Lagerlöf 1906, 86) ["fluffed up his feathers, lowered his wings, and lifted his tail so that the white-covert feathers were seen" (Lagerlöf 1907b, 149-50)]. The wood grouse says "tjäck, tjäck, tjäck" ["tjack, tjack, tjack"], while the black grouse say "orr, orr, orr" (87; 150-51). The gathering is a celebration of the ecstasies of spring. There is romping and bucking and cackling and cawing. On this special day, peace reigns among the animals and bad behavior is not permitted. Thus, when "Smirre räv" ["Smirre Fox"], a villainous figure in *Nils*, kills a wild goose, he is banished from the animal community.

On the one hand, Lagerlöf's depiction of the animal play-meeting is clearly fictional and allegorical: animal species do not congregate to celebrate spring and the community norms here resembles human ones. On the other hand, Lagerlöf's attention to difference *among* animals disrupts the human-animal binary, as the text insists the 'animal other' is, in fact, plural. Additionally, the absence of humans in this scene suggests that animals have lives, relationships, and even histories that exist independent of human consideration—indeed, these animals want nothing to do with humans. Though the idea of animals having community and history is perhaps anthropomorphic, it is not inherently anthropocentric. *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* invites what Ann-Sofie Lönnngren calls a "more-than-anthropocentric" reading (2015, 22). As Lönnngren suggests, humans' inability to fully escape an anthropocentric perspective does not preclude us from understanding and relating to animals. Fiction can offer a way *in* to animal life for the human reader by suggesting—via metaphor, via the vehicle of anthropomorphosis—that animals are complex subjects.

²⁷ Lagerlöf did make errors in representing animal species, a point zoologists latched onto in critiquing her text (Edström 1996, 57).

Though not the central figure in this chapter, Nils is in attendance at the animals' play-meeting. I argue Nils's not-quite-human status supports the more-than-anthropocentric leanings in this chapter and elsewhere in the text. Specifically, being an elf—a hyperbole for the smallness of the child—allows Nils to travel on the backs of birds. Prior scholarship has suggested that Nils's birds-eye view allows him to visually construct the map of Sweden—an intellectual exercise that requires distance and abstraction and that stands in contrast to the “embedded” experiences he has on the ground. I want to suggest that Nils's flight with the birds is also a bodily and “embedded” experience. The play-meeting chapter offers a good example. For the first time, Nils has the opportunity to ride on the back of a stork, and he immediately notices that the stork “satte av med helt annan fart än vildgässen” (Lagerlöf 1906, 85) [started off at a very different pace from the wild geese” (Lagerlöf 1907b, 146)]. The narrator describes Nils's flight:

Än låg han stilla på en omätlig höjd och flöt i luften utan att röra vingarna, än kastade han sig neråt med en sådan fart, att det föreföll, som om han skulle störta till marken hjälplöst som en sten [...] Pojken hade aldrig varit med om något sådant förut, och fastän han satt i ständig skräck, måste han erkänna för sig själv, att han inte förut hade vetat vad en god flykt ville säga. (Lagerlöf 1906, 85)

Now he lay still in an immeasurable height, and floated in the air without moving his wings, now he flung himself downward with such sudden haste that it seemed as though he would fall to the ground, helpless as a stone. [...] The boy had never been on a ride of this sort before; and although he sat there all the while in terror, he had to acknowledge to himself that he had never before known what a good flight meant. (Lagerlöf 1907b, 147)

Lagerlöf's description of the stork's flight is, of course, projection. However, her attempt to “apprehend the animal” (Lönngren) is impressive. Nils is human enough that the reader can imagine herself in his position, yet he is elf enough—small enough, “freak” enough—that he nearly becomes one with the bird. Nils's body is *on* and nestled *into* the body of the stork. Moreover, his queerness of species, his not-quite-human or not-yet-human state, reinforces his proximity to the animal.

Nils on birdback is this text's key child-animal figuration. The image most associated with this figuration is Nils on the back of a white goose, some version of which is featured on the cover of most editions of Lagerlöf's text. In contrast to the gray-colored wild geese, the white goose—referred to as *gåskarlan* in the Swedish and as Goosey-Gander in the English translation—is a tame goose from Nils's family farm. After Nils is turned into an elf in the first chapter, he sees flocks of wild geese flying overhead. Goosey-Gander is tempted by the wild geese's calls to join their ranks. Seeing Goosey-Gander's attempts to take flight, the shrunken Nils jumps around the bird's neck, hoping to ground him. As he does so, Goosey-Gander, as if tapping into a latent wildness, takes flight, and Nils must hold on for dear life. It is appropriate that Nils's first flight is with Goosey-Gander, and not only because the white goose's journey is a mirror of Nils's own (he leaves the farm with Nils, is with Nils and the other geese for most of their journey, and returns home with Nils in the end—a goosey *Bildungs*-tale). It is also appropriate because Goosey-Gander is a symbol of the intertwining of tamedness and wildness that is so much a part of

Lagerlöf's text: a tame goose turns wild; wild geese take in a tiny boy; a boy is transformed into an elf such that the child's closeness to animals is literalized.

The intertwining of the tame and the wild, of the human and the animal in *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* goes beyond the queer interspecies kinship I have argued is found in "Lille Alvide." Whereas Hansen's text is tentative and ambivalent about the child-animal figuration, Lagerlöf's text celebrates it: boy on gooseback is a key figure of the Swedish national imaginary. Indeed, an illustration of Nils on gooseback is found on the Swedish twenty-crown note: the child-animal figuration is both cultural and monetary currency. In theorizing this figuration, Donna Haraway's concepts are again useful. Nils-plus-geese resembles what Haraway calls "companion species"—interspecies partners that co-constitute one another's very bodies and being (Haraway 2016b). Haraway's related concept of the cyborg, where "one is too few, but two are too many," is also fitting here (Haraway 2016a, 60). I return to the concept of the child-animal figuration as cyborg in this dissertation's third chapter. For now, suffice it to say that the intimacy of bird-plus-boy, their closeness of bodies and of purpose, and the child's uncertain species status that queers it away from the human and towards the animal evoke Haraway's posthumanist figure. In Lagerlöf's text, it is the Nils-geese cyborg that makes possible the visualization and incorporation of the modern Swedish nation. It is also this cyborg that makes possible ambivalence about nation building—both, as I have argued, in how it offers the possibility of transcending national borders and in how it develops the protagonist's affinity with nonhuman kind. At the end of their journey, Nils says to Akka: "Men jag vill säga er, att jag inte ångrar, att jag följde med er i våras. Nej, jag vill hellre aldrig mer bli människa, än att jag inte skulle ha fått göra den resan" (Lagerlöf 1907a, 475) [I want to say to you that I don't regret having gone with you last spring [...] I would rather forfeit the chance of ever being human again than to have missed that trip" (Lagerlöf 1911, 322)]. Nils would rather be a goose-boy cyborg forever than to never have been one at all.

Conclusion: The Making and Breaking of Child-Animal Figurations

Perhaps the most likely way to think about the relationship between the two texts examined in this chapter is to highlight their contrasts, especially in terms of their national and literary historical contexts. The early nineteenth century nation building moment in Norway can be understood as relatively un-traumatic in that it did not come about as a result of war or internal political turmoil. In a sense, Norway had the privilege of constructing its national identity "from scratch." By contrast, Sweden's nation building at the turn of the twentieth century is marked by the trauma of loss. Swedish National Romanticism (or New Romanticism) serves a compensatory function in redefining and reconstituting the nation and national identity. In this context it is possible to understand Selma Lagerlöf's text as demonstrating a revisionary impulse: Nils on gooseback literally re-revisions the Swedish nation after its nineteenth century losses. While the largely naturalistic animal encounter depicted in Maurits Hansen's text would hardly have seemed novel in Norway at a time when most people lived in close proximity to wilderness, Lagerlöf's child-animal figuration is fantastical and strange and came about in

context of cultural and technological shifts over the course of the nineteenth century. Specifically, the ecological concern in Lagerlöf's text is only possible in an era following the Industrial Revolution; the idea of seeing an entire country is enabled by the onset of train travel;²⁸ and Lagerlöf's particular incarnation of the child-animal figuration is arguably an outgrowth of the tradition of child-animal figurations in children's literature so robustly built up during the nineteenth century. Whereas the child-animal figuration tests the new nation in "Lille Alvide," it helps to redefine the established nation in *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*.

As my analysis in this chapter suggests, however, the similarities between Hansen's and Lagerlöf's texts are significant and striking. In the conclusion to the section on "Lille Alvide" I noted that while one might expect a coercive stance in a national children's text, especially at a critical historical juncture for the nation, what I find there instead is ambivalence. I have argued the same is true of *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*. Specifically, Hansen's and Lagerlöf's texts represent the child's separation from the animal as ostensibly necessary for the development of the child and the nation, while at the same time rendering that separation not as comforting and conclusive, but as ambiguous, and even traumatic. In Hansen's text, the juxtaposition of Alvide's "rescue" and homecoming with the killing of the bear creates an uncomfortable proximity between the child and mortality. In a text where the child is meant to stand in for the nation, what does Alvide's entanglement with wilderness and death put at stake? It is hardly a straightforward case for nation building, but one, as I have shown, that becomes more straightforward with time as the "Lille Alvide" tale evolves. Though Lagerlöf's text does not so much flirt with death, its ending can be read as painful. In light of my interpretation of Nils as enmeshed with the body of the goose, Nils's final separation from the animal might be read as both an emotional and physical severing. (The committed child reader of Lagerlöf's text might feel a similar sense of pain or mourning in severing herself from the story, and from the book.) The notion of severing has an echo in Lagerlöf's unpublished chapter about the "brothers" of Sweden and Norway. The chapter imagines the two countries as adjacent bread loaves, bound at the seam. But just as Norway was cut loose from Sweden, so too was the chapter cut from Lagerlöf's text. The pulling apart of two bread loaves evokes the material and even fleshly severing (given the Biblical themes in the chapter) of two bodies—a painful separation, at least for Sweden. In the texts considered here, the making and breaking of child-animal figurations is bound up with the making and breaking of national boundaries and national narratives. As I have argued, what makes these texts remarkable is their relative open-endedness with regard to both the child and the nation.

²⁸ "Man kan dra en parallell mellan Selma Lagerlöfs resa med järnväg till Norrland sommaren 1904 och grundidén med de flyttande vildgässen i Nils Holgersson" (Elenius 2005, 195) [One can draw a parallel between Selma Lagerlöf's train trip to Northern Sweden in the summer of 1904 and the basic idea of the flying wild geese in Nils Holgersson].

CHAPTER TWO

Remembering with the Animal in Twentieth Century Autobiographies of Childhood

Introduction: Autobiography and the Child

In the previous chapter I examined how the child-animal figuration can disrupt the nation-building project in Scandinavian texts for children. I argued those child-animal figurations can be understood as queer for how they defy adult norms of development. In the third chapter of this dissertation I will consider child-animal figurations that go beyond encounter, including what I call “queer species,” children in “animal drag,” and cyborgs (following Haraway). In this chapter I focus on child-animal figurations in autobiographical texts about childhood by three Norwegian authors. Sigurd Hoel’s *Veien til verdens ende* (1933; *The Road to the World’s End*) is a psychoanalytic exploration of a life marked by shame and repression from an early age. The first chapter of Tarjei Vesaas’s *Båten om kvelden* (1968; *The Boat in the Evening*) revisits a theme found throughout his authorship: intergenerational tension, which is strikingly bound up with the figure of the horse. Cora Sandel’s *Dyr jeg har kjent* (1945; *Animals I Have Known*), an underexamined text, offers a playful and subversive representation of childhood and growth in which the child-animal figuration is the key device for examining the past. With an emphasis on the queer child figure and the role of the animal, my analysis will nuance the growth-as-trauma reading of Hoel’s text and will challenge essentialist views of the child in Vesaas’s authorship. With the girl-horse figuration at its center, Sandel’s text offers a transition to this dissertation’s third chapter in which the queerness of the child-animal figuration is most explicit. In this chapter, I ultimately argue that the autobiographical child can be understood not only as a figure of the author’s interior, or of her past, but as a sideways literary construct.

The online Norwegian encyclopedia (*Store norske leksikon*) defines autobiography (*selvbiografi*) as “en litterær sjanger hvor forfatteren forteller om seg selv og sin egen utvikling” (Melberg 2019) [a literary genre in which the author tells about their self and their development]. Though broad, I find the definition useful for how it points to the question of development: indeed, it is difficult to think of an autobiographical text that does not in some way address the development of the authorial subject. Yet, despite at least a popular notion that autobiographies tend to adhere to a progressive structure—connecting point a, to point b, to point c in a meaningful and logical life narrative—linear developmental trajectories are the exception, not the rule, in autobiographical texts. Modern autobiographies, which take countless forms, most often look to those moments in the author’s life that are remarkable, surprising, or deviant. Relatedly, it is largely the remarkable, surprising, and deviant figures in our societies who end up writing autobiographies at all. In many cases, these figures look to childhood in an attempt to explain how they arrived at their positions as adults. Prominent Scandinavian examples include Hans Christian Andersen’s *Mit Livs Eventyr* (1855, *The True Story of My Life*), in which the author blends fact and fiction in narrating an exceptional childhood, and August Strindberg’s *Tjänstekvinnans son* (1886, *The Son of a Servant*), in which Strindberg

treats his child self as a kind of “specimen” to be analyzed in context of his environment (Rugg 2019, 1649–51).

Noticeably, there is little scholarship dedicated to the question of the autobiographical child, by which I mean the child represented through the autobiographical retrospective narration of childhood. This is a point made by Marianne Gullestad in her introduction to *Imagined Childhoods* (1992). The exception, says Gullestad, is the prevalence of psychoanalysis in interpreting life narratives of various kinds. She makes the important point that Freud’s “emphasis on the significance of early childhood experiences has been generalized to such an extent that it is now a commonplace understanding in the Western world” (2). Indeed, Freud’s influence in naturalizing and centralizing the child subject goes a long way in explaining the pervasiveness of child narratives in the twentieth century. In *Strange Dislocations* (1995), Carolyn Steedman begins with history before Freud in accounting for how the child becomes the key figure for thinking about human interiority in the West. She shows how scientific thought during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries located the riddles of growth and death in the child body while also relating the child’s smallness to the tiny and interior components of life, such as the cell—an idea I return to below in my discussion of Hoel and the miniature. Steedman also points to how a fascination with the Romantic child subject emerges during the same period in which “history” becomes a field for investigating the past, helping to establish childhood as a site of historical excavation. Thus, over the course of the nineteenth century, the child becomes a figure both of psychological interiority and of the past—that is, a figure both “immanent” and “lost” (Steedman 1995, 10).

Steedman makes a related point when she writes, “the child grows up and goes away [...] the lost object is not to be found, for the very search alters it” (1995, 170–1). This paradox evokes some of the “problems” of autobiography: that memory is unreliable; that who we are (and who we were) changes with time; that the past self is more reconstructed than remembered. The search for the “lost” child, in other words, is doomed. And yet, it is a search that some authors take up. What might account for this? Why take on a project bound to fail? Some possible explanations are readily available. In psychoanalytic terms, the search for the “lost” or “inner” child may prove therapeutic; it may explain the adult to herself in a way that is clarifying, satisfying, or at least interesting. Certainly, this is a key impetus for Sigurd Hoel. The desire may also be artistic: the author may be inspired to write the child, to account for childhood aesthetically. I think this is true for each of the writers in this chapter. More controversially, however, I want to suggest that the desire to write the autobiographical child might be explained but what I call “an excess of childhood”—a phrase I borrow from Bachelard, who submits, “an excess of childhood is the germ of a poem” (1971, 100).

In proposing that Hoel, Vesaas, and Sandel demonstrate an excess of childhood, I do not mean that they are childish, or stuck in a prolonged adolescence, or that they romanticize the child. On the contrary, these authors reject sentimentality in representing the child (Hoel) or at least complicate it (Vesaas and Sandel). Rather, I want to connect the idea of an excess of childhood both to the authors’ self-conceptions as having a special capacity to understand childhood, as

well as to the figure of the queer child. Importantly, each of the authors in this chapter has at one time or another expressed that certain adults are better suited than others to the work of understanding, excavating, and representing the child and its interiority—a claim with which I agree. Sigurd Hoel said that the true poet must have a “samfølelse med barnesinnet” (Tvinnereim 1975, 104) [shared sensibility with the mind of the child] and that some adults—“de som endnu ikke er helt stivnet” [those who are not yet completely hardened]—have the essence of childhood “‘lagret’ i sig” (Tvinnereim 1975, 95) [stored inside themselves]. In *Dyr jeg har kjent*, the author/narrator suggests that various smells and pathways from childhood are “kartlagt i erindringen” (Sandel 1945a, 17) [mapped in memory] and that only certain adults (herself included) have the capacity to appreciate children. Meanwhile Vesaas has stated, “Kunstnaren er ofte eit hjelpelaust barn, ein fange av sine draumar og idear, det meir realistiske folk gjerne kallar innbillingar” (Vesaas 1985, 159) [The artist is often a helpless child, a captive of his dreams and ideas, which more realistic people may call fantasies].

In the previous chapter I argued that the excessive length of *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige* exacerbated the “sideways growth” of the text’s child protagonist. Here I want to theorize the autobiographical child as an excess of childhood, or as an excessive child. The *remembered* child may itself be construed as queer in its excess: any memory of childhood exists in surplus to the actual child person; the remembered child is a child out of time and place. The *autobiographical* child, I argue, is particularly excessive: to conjure, record, and publish this child is to insist on the possibility of that child, and perhaps on the possibility of childhood. The autobiographical child outlives the real one; it is neither before nor after the real child, but a sideways growth in the form of a text. As I argue in this chapter, the act of writing the child is a gesture not just backwards or inwards, but to the side.

This dissertation is concerned with the child and the animal. Each of the autobiographical texts considered here centers the animal in different ways. In Hoel’s text, the animal is most often a source of fear and a symbolically loaded figure. The Vesaas text contains animals both real and imagined, which help to figure the difference between adulthood and childhood. In Sandel’s text, animals are figures of play and intimacy. In each case, the autobiographical child needs the animal to negotiate the process of growing up—including, as I will argue, gender and social norms. It is not surprising that these autobiographical texts, and many others, contain animals given the prevalence of animals in children’s lives and the importance of animals in the child’s development, as I have already established. In addition to illustrating three versions of the role of animals in the child’s development, the texts by Hoel, Vesaas, and Sandel evoke a variation on a truism in animal studies—namely, that animals are good to *think with*. The texts in this chapter suggest that animals are good to *remember with*, as well.

Sigurd Hoel: Trauma and the Animal in *Veien til verdens ende*

Norwegian author Sigurd Hoel (1890–1960) is best known for his work during the interwar years. Though raised in a rural village in eastern Norway, he spent most of his life in Oslo where he worked as a literary critic, editor, and author. Hoel was a

prominent figure among Norwegian political radicals of his time and was active in the Norwegian resistance to the Nazi occupation of Norway (1940–1945). Freud’s work became influential in Norway in the 1920s and Hoel is foremost among Norwegian writers whose authorship demonstrates a profound interest in psychoanalysis. *Veien til verdens ende* (1933; *The Road to the World’s End*), the text considered here, illustrates Hoel’s concern for how shame and repression experienced by the child have lifelong consequences. Hoel once wrote, “mange—de fleste—faar ikke bare sin ungdom og manndom, men allerede sin *barndom* stekket og ødelagt av tidlige angstopplevelser som de ikke forstaar og ikke mestrer” (Tvinnereim 1975, 95) [many—most—have not only their youth and manhood, but even their childhood, cut short and destroyed by early experiences of angst, which they do not understand and do not overcome]. *Veien til verdens ende* portrays this deeply alienating version of human development by representing the experiences of a child at close range.

Though not strictly autobiographical, *Veien til verdens ende* draws largely on Hoel’s experiences, as is documented in Audun Tvinnereim’s excellent discussion of the text.²⁹ Tvinnereim calls *Veien til verdens ende* an “autobiographical novel,” following W. Somerset Maugham’s definition of the genre: “fact and fiction are inextricably mingled; the emotions are [the author’s] own, but not all the incidents are related as they happened” (Tvinnereim 1975, 153). Hoel himself said that, “bortsett fra det nødvendige kamuflasje” [aside from the necessary camouflage], the text is based on his own childhood memories (Tvinnereim 1975, 100). Hoel is not interested in what he calls “ytre hendelser” [external events] but in the child’s “indre hendelser” [internal events] (Tvinnereim 1975, 104), in the “*livsstemming* fra de forskjellige alderstrin” (99) [mood of life at various ages]. Though the text is narrated in the third-person, the narration remains remarkably close to the experiences and perspectives of the child protagonist. Tvinnereim helpfully suggests that Anders can be practically understood as the text’s narrator, while the text’s third-person narrator can be understood as the text’s “implied author” (1975, 109). In his review of *Veien til verdens ende*, the Norwegian author Helge Krog explicitly connected the text’s subtle narrator to its author. The “besk ironiker” [bitter ironist] and “melankolsk betrakter” [melancholic observer] behind the narrative, said Krog, has a name: Sigurd Hoel (Tvinnereim 1975, 109). It is no great leap to understand the author-narrator of this text as occupying a position akin to that of psychoanalyst. As Øystein Rotttem rightly puts it, *Veien til verdens ende* is “en psykoanalyse i skjønnlitterær form” (1991, 198) [a psychoanalysis in literary form].

Veien til verdens ende is a *Bildungsroman* in two parts. The first part, “Edens have” [“The Garden of Eden”], deals with the protagonist Anders’s childhood from three to six years of age; the second part, “Bygden” [“The Village”], is about Anders’s coming of age in the community; the novel ends with Anders’s departure from home at age fifteen. Appropriately, the two halves of the novel correspond with Freud’s psychosexual stages: the phallic stage (3–6 years) for the first half and latency and puberty for the second (Freud 1910). The title of the first part of Hoel’s text—“The

²⁹ See Tvinnereim (1975, 153–170) for a discussion of the parallels between the novel and Hoel’s biography.

Garden of Eden”—is clearly ironic. Though Anders experiences some happy and carefree moments, his life largely consists of frightening encounters and feelings of alienation: his mother betrays him to his father when Anders scribbles on his father’s desk; Anders is terrified of everyday objects such as pictures and brooms; and he is mocked for his inability to pronounce the letter ‘r.’ Both the first and final chapters of this section bear the title “Alene” [“Alone”], a fitting descriptor of Anders’s experience of early childhood. The second half of the text, “The Village,” is characterized by the theme of repetition: life after childhood, the novel suggests, is a matter of recurring trauma. As the text’s narrator states, “Tiden var en lang, lang vei. [...] Veien gikk og gikk i ring” (Hoel 1933, 245) [“Time was a long, long road. [...] The road ran in circles, around and around” (Hoel 1995, 222)]. This repetitious model of life is roughly reflected in the novel’s structure, as key experiences in “The Garden of Eden” resurface in “The Village,” including an animal encounter I discuss below. While both halves of the novel deal with Anders’s shame and fear, the sources of these become increasingly social and sexual in the novel’s second half. As Tvinnereim says, Hoel’s text is a “beretning om hvordan en karakter blir formet i et restriktivt samfunn” (1975, 145) [account of how a character is formed in a restrictive society]. Anders is an outsider in his provincial community and this constitutes a key source of his suffering. More specifically, he is an artist: to become a writer is his fate (Hoel 1933, 322; Hoel 1995; 289). Thus, says Tvinnereim, *Veien til verdens ende* is also a “portrait of the artist as a young man” (1975, 137).

Hoel was dismayed by sentimental representations of the autobiographical child, which he felt allowed the author to conceal himself while failing to treat the child as a serious subject (Tvinnereim 1975, 105). The child, Hoel believed, was capable of complex emotions: “selvforelskelse, selv-hat, likegyldighet, fortvilelse, sentimentalitet og dyp følelse av skam” (Tvinnereim 1975, 100) [self-infatuation, self-hate, indifference, despair, and a deep feeling of shame]. The author’s position is fitting with the challenge psychoanalysis poses to the notion of the innocent child. For Freud and others, the child has a range of drives and desires, including the sexual. I agree with Stockton that the Freudian child—“the child penned by Freud”—is queer not because it will grow up to be gay, but because it is “remarkably, threateningly precocious: sexual and aggressive” (Stockton 2009, 26–7). The animal plays a fascinating role in Hoel’s depiction of Anders as a psychological subject and non-innocent child. In the previous chapter I claimed that the child’s queerness was exacerbated by its intimate relationship to the animal other: queer interspecies kinship with a bear in the case of Lille Alvilde and a cyborg-like figuration in the case of Nils Holgersson on gooseback. My argument was that when the child gets “too close” to the animal, it threatens the child’s developmental trajectory towards becoming adult, human, and citizen. But what about the opposite case? What if the child does not get “close enough” to the animal? As Amy Ratelle suggests, this is also problematic: Locke held that children who are abusive to animals would be abusive towards humans, while Rousseau would have considered the child’s distance from the animal “unnatural” (Ratelle 7–9). The model Ratelle points to is a goldilocks model: for proper human development, the child must not get too close to, nor too far from, the animal; the relationship must be “just right.” As I argue below, Anders’s “improper” relationships to animals—his lack

of closeness to some, his willingness to kill others, his inability to hunt the huntable, his attraction to bugs—constitutes a critical aspect of his alienation and queerness as a child figure.

The Animal as Friend, Foe, and Metaphor in *Veien til verdens ende*

In “Lille Alvilde” and *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige*, the animal characters have symbolic value, but they are also decidedly and materially *animals*. Per my argument, Alvilde’s encounter with the bear in the woods unfolds in the entangled space of the “contact zone,” while Nils’s body is enmeshed with that of the flying goose. *Veien til verdens ende* is a text replete with animals—a snake, a bull, sheep, pigs, birds, insects—and though these animals are not anthropomorphized, their value is many ways more metaphorical in Hoel’s text than in “Lille Alvilde” or *Nils*. This is attributable to two systems governing the world of Anders in the novel: one is Christian, the other Freudian. For both systems, symbols are of utmost importance: a snake, a sheep, a child—none of these are ever “just” themselves, all figures are loaded with meaning. Below I examine three animal-centric scenes in Hoel’s text: the first involves insects; the second, the killing of a goat; and the third, a snake. Collectively, these scenes demonstrate Anders’s failure to take up masculine social norms and his embrace, instead, of the alternative life of the writer.

As noted above, in a narrative of normative childhood development, one expects the child to have an appropriately close relationship to the animal. Very often, this animal is a pet—and in fact, Anders does have a pet cat. However, rather than “using” the cat to learn compassion and affection (the normative child-animal relation), he uses the pet in a kind of philosophical experiment. Anders is curious to see what will happen when the cat crouches to attack a bird, but fearing that God will judge his morbid instinct, Anders chastises the cat—that is, until Anders feels secure that God is no longer watching, at which point he looks into the cat’s eyes and perceives no regret for its lusting after the bird (Hoel 1933, 33–4; Hoel 1995, 32–3). He then gives the cat a bowl of milk. Like so many of Anders’s animal encounters, this one is loaded with ambivalence. Notably, this scene takes place when Anders is very young: from an early age he is aware of his capacity to defy expectations for his innocence.

Anders never “properly” attaches to the pet. In fact, the only animals for which Anders appears to have affection are, by some standards, hardly animals at all: namely, insects. In “Søndag morgen” [“Sunday Morning”], the second chapter in Hoel’s text, the author presents a brief scene of paradise that is otherwise painfully absent for Anders. Here, little Anders sits on the ground and rustles up a bunch of “små dyr” [“tiny animals”]: “de var svarte og grønne og brune og hadde blankt skjold på ryggen som solen skjen i. Når han slo en jordklump i stykker, datt det jord ned på dyrene og gjemte dem; men en liten stund efter krabbet de sig ut av jorden igjen og løp videre” (Hoel 1933, 12) [“they were black and green and brown and had bright shields on their backs which threw back the sunlight. When he knocked a lump of dirt to pieces, the dirt fell on the animals and hid them; but in a little while they crawled out again and scurried on” (Hoel 1995, 14)]. The text is not explicit about Anders’s emotions, but Anders clearly associates this insect play with sunshine,

birdsong, and rest. Insects come up elsewhere in the text with positive associations: Anders is friendly towards an earthworm, whom he promises he will not use as fishing bait; Anders shows admiration for the strength of the flea and the dung beetle (Hoel 1933, 42–3; Hoel 1995, 40–1). A worm, a beetle, a flea: these are the closest things to peers that Anders can find; like him, they are small, lowly, and vulnerable. In *On Longing* (1993), Susan Stewart argues that the miniature is a metaphor for interior space while the gigantic stands for the social. This certainly seems to be the case for Anders, for whom insects represent an interiority that is, if not innocent, at least not yet compromised by trauma and repression. In one of the rules that Hoel set for himself in writing *Veien til verdens ende*, he stated: “vær opmerksom paa de smaa tingene, der ligger alle hemmelighetene” (Tvinnereim 1975, 105) [pay attention to *the small things*, there lie all of the secrets]. Cora Sandel makes a related point in *Dyr jeg har kjent* when she suggests it is the “kryp” [creeping insects] and the “beskjedent ugress de voksne ikke så og aldri visste navn på” [modest weeds the adults didn’t see and never knew the names of] that matter to the child (Sandel 1945a, 17). In the following example, the tenderness of the miniature—including, again, an insect—is threatened by masculine violence.

The chapter “Søndag i august” [“Sunday in August”]—an apparent echo of “Søndag morgen”—appears in the second half of the novel and takes place when Anders is an adolescent. “Søndag i august” opens with Anders reading contentedly in the sunshine. He soon joins a group of his friends, four other boys, and they row out to an island. Once there, they climb a tree and settle into a comfortable spot amidst its limbs. Suddenly, a bumblebee tumbles out of the sky and lands in Anders’s lap. The boys show an immense degree of concern for the bee. They decide it must be saved. One of the boys carries the bee on a leaf to the top off the tree and nudges it out into the air, where it safely flies away. The boys are delighted. This is a remarkable scene in Hoel’s text. Not only does it offer a rare idyllic depiction of childhood, it is also a stunningly tender representation of boys, which stands in stark contrast to the novel’s typical rendering of masculinity as crude and stern.

Unsurprisingly for Anders’s world, this moment of masculine gentleness is interrupted. The interruption is rendered symbolically as Albert, another boy, calls for Anders and his friends to come down from the tree, literally and figuratively grounding the boys after their bumblebee reverie. Anders and his friends regard Albert as tougher and wilder than themselves, and also as mysterious: he is a foreigner. At Albert’s suggestion, they row out to an island that is home to a herd of goats. Bored, Albert suggests the boys force a baby goat under water to see if it will walk back to shore. The first couple of times they do this, the goat manages, but barely. Anders’s friends become literally sick at this twisted game but Anders is hopelessly drawn in: “Det var spennende. Det var som når én klødde—og måtte klø sig til det svidde—til en klødde på bare røde kjøttet—og enda klødde det, klødde det...” (Hoel 1933, 286) [“It was exciting. It was like itching—you had to scratch till it hurt, till you were scratching nothing but red meat—and still you itched and itched...” (Hoel 1995, 258)]. For Anders, it is not just that there is an itch that must be scratched, but that the scratching begets the itching in a cycle of longing that will not be satisfied. As the game proceeds, Anders senses that this is an important moment in his life: “Han så to veier, han visste han kunde velge, det stod dunkelt for

ham, at nu valgte han, ikke bare for denne gangen, men for mange ganger, for alltid..." (Hoel 1933, 290) ["He saw two paths, he knew he could choose, he dimly realized he was making a choice this very moment, not only for now but for many times to come, for always..." (Hoel 1995, 261)]. At one point Anders feels like he will vomit but he represses the catharsis and goes through with the cruel act. When the goat is finally dead, Anders feels as if he has seen it all: "Han syntes det var som om han hadde vært ved verdens ende—som om han hadde sett alt som fantes å se, vært med på alt som fantes å være med på. [...] Han kjente sig så alene som om han stod alene ved verdens ende" (Hoel 1933, 296) ["It seemed to him he'd been to the world's end—as if he'd seen everything there was to see, taken part in everything there was to take part in. [...] He felt utterly alone, as if he stood at the world's end" (Hoel 1995, 266–67)]. Metaphorically, Anders has scratched himself raw. One cynical but possible interpretation of this scene is that Anders has "used" the animal properly to grow up: he drowned the goat and is remorseful; he is unlikely to show such cruelty towards humans. However, my interpretation is that Anders has gone too far: he could not muster compassion for the goat; he did not come *close enough* to the animal, and so, his humanity failed.

In a final example of the child-animal figuration in Hoel's novel, I turn to the immensely symbolic figure of the snake. There are two chapters in Hoel's novel entitled "Ormen" ["The Snake"]: one in "The Garden of Eden" and one in "The Village." The first "Ormen" chapter comes about midway through the text's first half. To this point in the novel, Anders has experienced alienation in a variety of ways: the text opens with Anders crying for his mother, but his mother does not come; when the cold north wind blows, Anders imagines it personified as a frightening old man; from his place in the family kitchen, Anders sees the world as divided in two—the child's world beneath the table and the adult's world above it. As these examples suggest, the primary source of Anders's sense of alienation is the difference between the child and adults: the child is small, weak, and simple; adults are big, strong, and cunning. Ander's parents, helpers on the farm, neighbors, and even older children make Anders feel unsafe and alone. Worse, he regularly fears that he will never grow up. Anders does not want to become an adult *per se*, but growing up is the only way to contend with adults' power.

The only thing more powerful than adults in Anders's world is God. Anders has learned that God is omniscient and observes his every sin. Though one may turn to God in prayer, Anders imagines God as distant and mysterious, and possibly vengeful. Both Johan de Mylius and Tvinnereim suggest that God is just one of various figures, or "nøkkelord" (Tvinnereim 1975, 116) [keywords] found in Hoel's text that represent Anders's fears. "Vei" [road], "verden" [world], "ormen" [the snake], and "død" [death] are others. These figures weave together throughout the text in what de Mylius calls an "indre associativt fletværk" (1972, 58) [internal associative weave]. The culmination of these fears is fittingly vague: its name is "Noe" [Something] and visits Anders in his sleep. "Something" has a long neck like a snake but its form is otherwise difficult to decipher; it is associated with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and there is a hole where its face should be (Hoel 1933, 121–122; Hoel 1995, 111). Though Anders learns that the snake is a figure of

the devil, he personally comes to associate it with God, making it a highly charged and ambivalent symbol.

The first “Ormen” chapter contains a collection of experiences—Anders is unsure whether they are real memories or just dreams—of frightening encounters with animals: Anders is terrified to see the red eyes of a rat when he is left in an attic as punishment; when a bull gets loose on the farm, it charges directly and Anders and he is rescued in the nick of time; Anders is perplexed and frightened when he spies a hoard of toads with warts that look like human eyes. In the chapter’s titular scene, Anders is playing in the yard when he hears a scream. He learns that some of “de store” [“the big ones”], as the narrator often refers to adults, have killed a snake (Hoel 1933, 68–9; Hoel 1995, 63–4). Anders rushes to see. At first, he only sees a stick, but as he steps closer, he realizes the “stick” is writhing. Anders’s father assures him the snake is harmless, but Anders is unconvinced. He watches the snake in mesmerized fear:

Anders vilde ikke se mere på ormen.
Han så og så.
Han hadde aldri sett noe så levende som den døde ormen. Han vilde ikke se på den mere.
(Hoel 1933, 69)

Anders didn’t want to look at the snake anymore.
He looked and he looked.
He’d never seen anything so alive as the dead snake. He didn’t want to look at it anymore.
(Hoel 1995, 64)

As Anders fixates on the snake, he senses the animal looking back:

Den stirret på ham så han blev aldeles alene. Den blinket ikke. Den skammet seg ikke. Den så tvers igjennem øielokkene. Den så tvers igjennem ham, men den lot som den krøp i støvet for ham. Den var stygg og ekkel og visste alt. (Hoel 1933, 70)

It stared at him, making him feel utterly alone. It didn’t blink. It wasn’t ashamed. It could see right through its eyelids. It saw right through him but pretended to lick the dust before him. It was ugly and disgusting and knew all. (Hoel 1995, 65)

The God-like snake embodies the force of repression in Anders’s life: it knows all of Anders’s shame and paralyzes Anders with fear. Step by step, Anders retreats. The adults around Anders appear oblivious to the weight of this encounter. As he walks away from the animal, Anders has the thought to one day kill the snake:

Når han blev stor skulde han drepe ormen.
Når han blev stor—. Men han kjente han trodde ikke inni sig, at han blev så stor noen gang at han klarte å drepe ormen. (Hoel 1933, 70)

When he grew up he would kill the snake.
When he grew up—. But he felt that deep down he didn’t believe he’d ever be big enough to kill the snake. (Hoel 1995, 65)

Anders's sneaking suspicion that he will never be big enough to kill the snake is also a hunch that what haunts him now will never go away.

In the second "Ormen" chapter, which comes about midway through the novel's second half, Anders is an adolescent and he has had his first (troubling) sexual encounter. He feels alienated at school but loves to read. Life's repetitions are maddening. At one point the narrator says, "Han tenker med undring tilbake på gamle dager, før gjentagelsen kom inn i verden" (Hoel 1933, 236) ["He thinks back in wonder to the old days, before repetition entered the world" (Hoel 1995, 214)]. For Anders, the days of childhood and newness are long gone. This "Ormen" chapter starts happily enough: it is Anders's birthday and his parents have gone to a party, leaving Anders to himself. Anders has received a rifle for his birthday. He is pleased with the gift, but also finds it "kold og farlig" (Hoel 1933, 326) ["cold and dangerous" (Hoel 1995, 293)]. The vision of the rifle suddenly reminds him of the snake killed nearby so many years ago. He remembers that a crow eventually flew off with the dead snake in its mouth. Anders's father has given him permission to kill crows, but he does not want to: "Aldri skulde han drepe dyr" (Hoel 1933, 327) ["He would never kill animals" (Hoel 1995, 294)].

Anders decides to try some shooting practice instead. Not long after he begins, a neighbor boy, Amund, approaches. Amund is stronger and older than Anders, and though Anders admires him, he has a painful memory of Amund mocking him as a younger boy. Amund wants to shoot, and Anders lets him, but it turns out Amund is a bad shot, leaving Anders with feelings of pity. After Amund leaves, Anders is at a loss for what to do. Eventually, he sees a crow in the distance. He does not want to kill it, but he aims nonetheless. "Han traff sikkert ikke" (Hoel 1933, 332) ["He was sure to miss" (Hoel 1995, 298)], the narrator indicates Anders's thought. But Anders does hit the bird, though he does not kill it, and he is filled with remorse. The crow stares at Anders with "et svart øie" (Hoel 1933, 332) ["a black eye" (Hoel 1995, 299)], just like the "svart øie" Anders perceives when he first stares down the barrel of his birthday rifle (Hoel 1933, 327; Hoel 1995, 294), and not unlike the ominous eye of the snake that saw "through" him all those years before. Anders decides he must kill the crow out of mercy, but when he pursues the bird, it eludes him, finally letting out a cry that calls forth a great flock of birds from the forest. In a scene that is evocative of Hitchcock's *The Birds*, the flock pursues Anders with "rasende, grådige skrik" (Hoel 1933, 334) ["furious, greedy cries" (Hoel 1995, 300)]. Anders makes it to the safety of the house and the birds retreat. When he hears his parents' carriage approaching, Anders realizes he must retrieve his rifle. When he gets to the rifle, which was left by a lake, Anders compulsively throws the weapon into the water. He does not know why, but just before he throws the gun, a word occurs to him: "huggorm" (Hoel 1933, 335) ["adder" (Hoel 1995, 301)]. The chapter ends with Anders anticipating his father's demand for an explanation, but:

Han hadde ikke noe å forklare.
Kunde ikke, kunde ikke forklare. (Hoel 1933, 335)

He had nothing to explain.
Couldn't—just couldn't explain. (Hoel 1995, 301)

Following de Mylius's observation, this chapter weaves together a number of symbols: the crow, the snake, the eye, the gun. Anders's relationship to the (phallic) rifle, to his father, and to Amund in this chapter demonstrate Anders's profound ambivalence about—if not outright rejection of—the norms of masculinity in his community. Interestingly, there is no actual snake in this chapter. Rather, the chapter's title, Anders's memory of the snake being carried off by a crow, and the moment in which the word "huggorm" triggers Anders to heave the rifle into the lake are evocative of the original traumatic snake encounter. The last of these instances is especially intriguing. It is not the image of the snake's "trekantede hodet" ["three-cornered head"]—which appears throughout the text—that occurs to Anders at this time, but rather a word. And it is not the original word, the word from the ur-scene—"ormen" [the snake]—but a variation: "huggorm" ["adder"]. What becomes increasingly clear over the course of Hoel's novel is that Anders is bound to be a writer. At the end of this chapter Anders's poetic conversion of the original traumatic moment with the snake is clear: he twists the word, he rejects the gun. Though perhaps not a moment of progress, this does seem like a moment of growth, though most likely of the sideways kind: a personal elaboration of the metaphor.

Beyond the Psychoanalytic Frame: Development Gone Right for the Writer

One way to read *Veien til verdens ende* is as a text explicitly engaged with the problem of development gone wrong: though Anders "gets out" of his home community by the end of the narrative, it is clear that he will wrestle with childhood traumas for the rest of his life. What, we might ask, does Hoel's text suggest would constitute development *gone right*? Is it a childhood free of trauma, or at least one less plagued by repression? Perhaps. And yet, I argue, Anders's traumas are critical to his development as a writer.

Both psychoanalysis and the model of queerness that I engage in this project are interested in deviations from "normative" development. In a psychoanalytic model of development, those deviations register as traumas, and the best possible outcome is mitigation of past harms through a therapeutic process (writing, in Hoel's case). By contrast, the model of queer childhood makes available the possibility of deviations that are playful, pleasurable, or even happy. In Hoel's text, the scenes with insects seem the most striking in this regard: the small, vulnerable creatures are relatable, perhaps offering the child a way to perceive his own vulnerability as beautiful and containing a kind of potential. This is especially true of the bee, which, though injured, flies off and (presumably) lives on. Even the beetle, whose shell—or "shield," as Hoel calls it—can be read as a symbol of psychological armor, might be a positive example: the insect's armor is *built in* rather than *built up* through traumatic experiences over time—a form of inherent resilience that the child might admire. Perhaps most importantly, the model of queer childhood disrupts the linearity and containment implied by psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is invested in the ideas of the "lost" and "inner" child discussed in the chapter's introduction: the "lost child" is a figure both past and internal, a figure contained within a narrative of the self, whether that narrative is rendered in terms of time or

psychological depth (or both). The queer child, by contrast, stands for the possibility of sideways growth, for a kind of development that I read as busting out of the regular frames: it adheres neither to a normative mode of development that represses deviations, nor to a psychoanalytic mode that seeks to heal from repression but not necessarily to create something new. I read Anders's *huggorm* moment as especially significant with respect to sideways growth: Anders makes a new snake out of words, an animal for his own poetry. On the path to becoming a writer, Anders requires the kinds of deviations that sometimes transcend trauma, suggesting that Hoel's own psychoanalytic frame cannot alone accommodate his narrative of an artist-in-the-making.

Tarjei Vesaas: Negotiating Childhood and Memory in "Slik det står i minnet"

Veien til verdens ende is an outlier among representations of childhood: there are few literary texts that adhere so closely to, and that so fully endorse, the perspective of the child. The examples by Tarjei Vesaas and Cora Sandel considered here are less radical in their depictions of the child, not least for how they grant authority to the reflective adult author/speaker in the text. Though the child figures in these texts follow relatively normative growth trajectories, the texts by Vesaas and Sandel poke holes in the developmental model. In the case of Sandel, this occurs through the uncomfortable insistence of death in the life of the child. In the case of Vesaas, this happens through a number of ambivalent sideways moves, which I elaborate below.

Though relatively unknown outside of Scandinavia, Tarjei Vesaas (1897–1970) is one of Norway's most celebrated authors. Vesaas was primarily a poet and novelist. He wrote in Nynorsk³⁰ and his authorship is largely concerned with life in rural Norway. Vesaas's prose is marked by a highly lyrical and singular style, especially in his later novels such as *Fuglane* (1957; *The Birds*) and *Is-slottet* (1963; *The Ice Palace*). Like the theme in Hoel's *Veien til verdens ende*, many of Vesaas's texts revolve around the problem of being an outsider or artist figure in a provincial community. Unlike Hoel, however, Vesaas appears to have had it both ways: Vesaas spent most of his life on a farm near his childhood home in rural Telemark, where he lived and worked alongside his wife, the poet Halldis Moren Vesaas. Childhood and growth are central themes in many of Vesaas's texts. *Det store spelet* (1934; *The Great Cycle*), which Hoel admired (Tvinnereim 1975, 99), is about a young man who initially rejects, and eventually embraces, his role to inherit the family farm. In *Vårnatt* (1954; *Spring Night*), a boy comes of age over the course of a single, strange night. And in *Is-slottet*, an eleven-year-old girl dies tragically in the cold, leaving her friend (and doppelganger) to mourn and, eventually, to move on and grow up.

Unlike Hoel, Vesaas did not show a strong interest in Freud (Hermundsgård 1989, 52). Indeed, Vesaas's depictions of childhood and growth are more epic and lyrical than analytic. And while, as I have argued, Hoel's text challenges the very prospect of growing up, thus troubling the notion of development, Vesaas's

³⁰ Nynorsk is one of two official written standards of the Norwegian language; the other is Bokmål. While Bokmål resembles Danish, Nynorsk was developed by Ivar Aasen during the nineteenth century to resemble the dialects of people living in rural Norway.

representations of childhood tend to be invested in “natural” cycles of life and death and often assign positive value to heteronormative sexuality. Yet, there are moments of hesitation or ambivalence in Vesaas’s developmental narratives—perhaps most poignantly, the death of Unn in *Is-slottet*, which is a physical and symbolic affront to development—that invite a queer reading.³¹ Below I examine “Slik det står i minnet” [“As It Stands in the Memory”], the first chapter in Vesaas’s final book, *Båten om kvelden* (1968; *The Boat in the Evening*). Though *Båten om kvelden* is often called a novel, Vesaas considered it “ein indre sjølvbiografi” (O. Vesaas 1995, 397) [an interior autobiography]. As I will argue, the autobiographical adolescent subject in “Slik det står i minnet” relies on animals both real and imagined to negotiate his relationship to his father, to masculinity, and to the problem of growing up. At the end of this section, I examine Vesaas’s 1946 poem, “Hesten,” in which the strange presence of a horse at the window prompts the speaker to consider his relationship to his own child and to his work.

Growing Up with Animals in Vesaas’s Authorship

As Steinar Gimnes observes in his thorough discussion of *Båten om kvelden*, Vesaas’s final book is best understood as autobiographical not just in relationship to the author’s life but also in relationship to his authorship (2013, 438). That is, while the text is sometimes “opent [sjølvbiografisk]” (Gimnes 2013, 444) [openly autobiographical]—especially in its first and penultimate chapters, which are portraits of the author’s father and mother respectively—it also draws on motifs found throughout Vesaas’s body of work, not least “ungdomens eksistensielle opplevingar” (Gimnes 2013, 438) [the existential experiences of youth]. Indeed, the text is a collection of scenes and stories that depict the strange thrills and disappointments of growing up: a boy bears witness to, then violently interrupts, a crane dance (“I myrane og på jorda” [“In the Marshes and on the Earth”]); a girl waits in the cold for a boy who never arrives (“Vårvinter” [“Spring in Winter”]); a young man contemplates the power of language (“Ord og ord” [“Words, Words”]). Though there is no overarching plot, the book’s chapters are mostly connected by the presence of a first-person narrator and are roughly chronological according to the author’s life. The chapters are also preceded by two prefaces written by the author, which take the form of poems. The second preface, which Vesaas said should inform the reader’s interpretation of the text as a whole (Vesaas 1968b), is subtitled, “om dette splintra bilete frå den seine båten” (7) [“about this fragmentary picture from the loitering boat”]. As Gimnes points out, the “late” (or “loitering,” per Elizabeth Rokkan’s translation) boat of the preface’s subtitle and the “evening” boat of the book’s title are metaphors for the author in old age (2013, 442). The second preface depicts a boat distant from shore, framing the text as a work of reflection.

Before turning my attention to “Slik det står i minnet,” I will briefly discuss *Det store spelet*, which, as Gimnes says, is a “viktig samtalepartner” (2013, 445) [important conversation partner] to the first chapter in *Båten om kvelden*. *Det store*

³¹ The relationship between Siss and Unn also has decidedly queer overtones, epitomized in the scene in which the two girls undress and look at one another in a mirror.

spelet draws significantly on the author's life experiences: like Per Bufast, the protagonist in the novel, Vesaas was the *odelsgutt* (oldest son) and stood to inherit the family farm. Per's father is modeled on Vesaas's own: stern and unyielding, an example of the "gamal, streng bondetradisjon" (Gimnes 2013, 446) [old, strict farming tradition]. However, unlike Per, who eventually accepts his fate as *odelsgutt*, Vesaas rejected this role in his own life, though, as mentioned above, he eventually purchased and settled on his uncle's farm near his childhood home—a sideways move in the Stocktonian sense, as it disrupts the linear model of inheritance and regeneration.

In *Det store spelet*, key moments in Per's development revolve around animals. The text opens with a scene in which the six-year-old Per must come to terms with the fact that a newborn calf will be killed. Here and throughout the novel, Per wonders at his father's seeming indifference about killing animals. Similar to Anders in *Veien til verdens ende*, Per questions this (masculine) norm as he fails to live up to it. As time passes, however, Per grows more comfortable with the "necessity" of animal death—a process that culminates in his own killing of a beloved but worn out workhorse, *Gulen* [Goldie]. The killing is a turning point: Per suddenly perceives the connectivity of life and death and that his life's purpose is to remain on the farm. The novel concludes with a scene that intertwines animal death and erotic flirtation: Per kills an injured frog out of mercy, which impresses his love interest, Signe; he then declares his love for Signe and she reciprocates (Vesaas 1934, 298–99). Given the striking role of animals in these rites of passage, Per's development would appear to follow the developmental logic outlined by Amy Ratelle: the child "uses" the animal to grow and learn, though the animal must ultimately be subjugated in the interest of the human narrative. And yet, I argue, Per's ambivalence throughout the novel—about remaining at the farm, about animal death—is evoked in the text's ending. Not unlike the conclusion of *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige*, in which the child is ambivalent about leaving the wild geese, *Det store spelet* ends with the now-grown Per reflecting on his old workhorse. Though the memory gives Per comfort, the novel concludes with the image of *Gulen* lying dead upon "dei fortraska markene" (Vesaas 1934, 301) [the trampled fields], complicating the sense of happy ending. It is not difficult to understand the horse's death as a metaphor for the death childhood.

Real and Imagined Animals in "Slik det står i minnet"

Like *Det store spelet*, "Slik det står i minnet" is partly a text about the end of childhood, and it also turns on the figure of the horse. In the text, three figures—a son, a father, and a workhorse—are clearing snow on a logging road. The work is drudgery. The boy imagines that a ring of strange creatures surrounds them as they work. The imagined animals offer the boy a mental escape from the hard labor and harsh father. The boy longs to have a more intimate relationship with his father, but the man is thoroughly closed off.³² The turning point comes when the workhorse is injured. The father tells his son to tend to the horse, but the son refuses, shifting the

³² This is the focus Gimnes's discussion of "Slik det står i minnet" (2013, 444–49).

intergenerational power dynamic. By the end of the chapter, the boy has essentially grown up, and the ring of imagined animals has disappeared forever. Below I argue that the ring of imagined creatures in “Slik det står i minnet” mediates not only the space between childhood and adulthood but also the space between the autobiographical child and the remembering adult. I further argue that in reworking the horse symbol in his authorship—a meaningful twist on the workhorse in his texts—Vesaas negotiates his position as a writer relative to childhood and animality.

“Slik det står i minnet” opens by framing a memory. As Steinar Gimnes points out, the first-person narrator is not the adolescent subject of the story but the reflecting author (Gimnes 2013, 444): “Der står han i silande snø. For min tanke i silande snø. Ein far—og hans vinterlodne brune hest, i snø” (Vesaas 1968, 9) [There he stands in sifting snow. In my thoughts in sifting snow. A father—and his winter-shaggy, brown horse, in snow” (Vesaas 2003, 11)]. It is as if the narrator views this scene from a distance of both time and space, with the snow suggesting the hazy buffer of memory. Following a gap on the page—another white buffer—the text “zooms in,” setting the scene “langt, inne på skogen” (Vesaas 1968, 9) [“far away, deep in the forest” (Vesaas 2003, 11)]. The place is silent and walled in by snow. “Kva er utanfor?” (Vesaas 1968, 9) [“What is outside?” (Vesaas 2003, 11)], the text wonders. Typical of Vesaas, it is unclear who or what poses the question. Perhaps it is the remembering author who poses the question. Or, perhaps it is the thought of the remembered adolescent, to whom the focus now shifts. “Det er noko utanfor” [“There is something outside”] says the text, “men det er ein gute-løyndom. Det er djupt hemmeleg” [“but it’s a boy’s secret, deeply concealed” (Vesaas 1968, 9; Vesaas 2003, 11)]. Here and throughout the chapter, “outside” refers to a literal space beyond the confines of the physical work environment, but also to the figurative space of poetry and dreams. The boy at the beginning of this story is just young enough—“et barn, eller halvt barn” (Vesaas 1968, 10) [“a child, or a half-child” (Vesaas 2003, 11)]—to believe that there is some physical presence just beyond his scope of clear vision. This presence takes the form of a ring of imagined animals:

Ikkje vanlege dyr. Dyr ein aldri har sett. Dei er høge som to hestar på einannan, og dei har noko raude snutar som dei dukkar ned og slår mot skoddemuren med, medan dei tenker. Dei har lange halar som dei veiftar etter snøfillene med, som det hadde vori sommarver og fluger. Dei er så mange at dei kan stå side om side i ein samansveisa ring—og dei har små auge som dei let mest i hop medan dei står forundrar seg og tenker. (Vesaas 1968, 10)

Not ordinary animals. Animals I’ve never seen before. They’re as tall as two horses one on top of the other, and they lower red muzzles and strike at the wall of mist while they are thinking. They switch at the snowflakes with long tails, as if it were summer and there were flies. There are so many of them that they can stand side by side in an unbroken ring—and they have small eyes that they almost close as they stand wondering and thinking. (Vesaas 2003, 12)

Though the animals are fabulous, their form is specific. They resemble horses, thus offering a counterpoint to the text’s real horse, whose purpose is labor. The imagined animals are “så levande at dei har ein liten lukt som når hit” (Vesaas 1968, 11) [“so real that they have a slight smell that reaches me” (Vesaas 2003, 12–13)], the narrator, now aligned with the autobiographical child, suggests. But the child

quickly adjusts this interpretation: “Kanskje det ikkje er lukt, ein veit ikkje sikkert kva ein kjenner det med” (Vesaas 1968, 11) [“Perhaps it is not a smell; it is not easy to decide what I sense it with” (Vesaas 2003, 13)]. The fact that the boy cannot distinguish quite what or how he senses the animals reinforces the tentativeness of their presence. Perhaps as a younger child the boy could have sensed the animals fully—seeing, smelling, and even touching them; but now, on the cusp of growing up, the sense is vague, if still powerful. Between the boy and the animals stands “ein skoddemuren og snøveret” (Vesaas 1968, 11) [“the wall of mist and the falling snow” (Vesaas 2003, 13)]. The mist and snow obscure the ring of animals, but they protect it, too: in better weather the animals’ absence would be all too clear.

Lars Nylander (2009) argues that the ring of imagined animals in “Slik det står i minnet” functions as what D.W Winnicott calls a “border object.” The child experiences the border object as both part of himself and as something strange or separate, thus allowing the child to delineate himself from his surroundings while also establishing a secure relationship to the world around him (Nylander 2009, 150–51). The ring of imagined animals in Vesaas’s text, says Nylander, offers the child a “mental strategi för att hantera livskonflikter” (2009, 151) [mental strategy for handling life conflicts]. The main conflict in Vesaas’s text is the conflict between father and son, and, relatedly, the son’s internal conflict around whether to follow in his father’s footsteps and become a farmer. I argue that the ring of imagined animals in this text also functions as a border object for the recollecting author, between the present and the past. It can be understood as a psychological buffer in exploring a traumatic memory, and also as a literary framing device that helps translate the memory into language. The association between the ring of imagined animals and the wall of mist and snow in the text is certain. As I claimed above, snow and mist help to frame the memory at the beginning of the text; the same is true of the text’s conclusion, guiding the reader into and out of the scene of memory.

The boy’s reverie with the ring of imagined animals is interrupted by a sharp question from his father, jolting the child back to reality and back to work. Boy, man, and horse press on, heaving and trampling the snow to clear a path. The boy thinks about the ring of animals to distract himself. Suddenly, the father pauses; the boy wonders: does his father see the ring of animals? “Han òg” (Vesaas 1968, 13) [“He too” (Vesaas 2003, 14)], the boy suspects: father also senses something beyond the work, beyond the mundane. As the text proceeds, the narrator wonders what the father longs for, what he dreams of. The father used to have dreams, but does he now? Regarding the father, the narrator says, “Han er ikkje sterk—at han har det laget han har, kjem av at han *var* sterk eingong. Kanskje han var det ikkje då heller? Men det heiter så” (Vesaas 1968, 14–15) [“He is not strong—he has that build because he *was* strong once upon a time. Perhaps he was not strong then either? But they say he was” (Vesaas 2003, 16)]. There is a tender skepticism in the narration here that the reader can imagine belonging to either the child or the adult author. Nylander suggests that Vesaas’s use of the impersonal pronoun *ein* (one) helps to create an elision between these two figures, as when the narrator says, “kanskje ein veit kva han drøymmer om” (Vesaas 1968, 14). The *ein* could refer to either the remembered boy or the remembering adult, who is here reflecting on the dreams of the father (“han”). Noticeably, this use of “ein” is rarely captured in Rokkan’s mostly

excellent translation of the text. For example, she translates the above sentence as, “perhaps I know what he’s dreaming about” (Vesaas 2003, 15). The use of *I* instead of *one* links the thought most closely with the boy in the scene, thus sacrificing some of the fluidity between the remembered and remembering subjects. In contrast to the first-person *eg* (I) or the third-person *han* (he), says Nylander, *ein* belongs to “den indirekte diskurs där distinktionen mellan karaktär och berättare upphävs” (2009, 152) [indirect discourse, where the distinction between character and narrator is abolished]. Indeed, this aspect of Vesaas’s style in an autobiographical work is a kind of affirmation of Lejeune’s pact.

It is not just the boy and the man who have dreams; the workhorse does, too. “Ein ser det på han at han tenker” (Vesaas 1968, 13) [“You can see he’s thinking” (Vesaas 2003, 15)], reflects the narrator as the boy considers the horse. The narrator imagines the horse thinks in poems:

Snø ned og snø ned.
 Slik er min song og slik er min song,
 dagen er lang
 og slik er min song,
 la meg berre snø ned, og snø ned.
 Dagen er lang, og dagen er lang.
 Godt er å sova, snø ned. (Vesaas 1968, 16)

Snowbound, snowed under, and trapped in the snow.
 This is my song and thus is my song,
 the day is long
 and this is my song,
 Let me simply get snowbound and trapped in the snow.
 The day is long, and the day is long.
 It is good to sleep, snowbound and trapped in the snow. (Vesaas 2003, 17)

This discovery of the horse’s poetry ushers in a shift in the child’s development. Immediately following the horse’s song in the text, the child is no longer referred to as “barnet” [“the child”] or “halv barnet” [“the half child”] but as “det store barnet” (Vesaas 1968, 16): “the big child” (translated as “the big boy” (Vesaas 2003, 17)). The imagined animals are still present, but the mist is starting to lift, threatening their disappearance. “Ein er for ung til dette” (Vesaas 1968, 17) [“I am too young for this” (Vesaas 2003, 18)], the narrator reflects for the second time in the text, “ein må ha den rare hemmelege ringen like utanfor” (Vesaas 1968, 17) [“I must have that strange, secret ring just outside” (Vesaas 2003, 18)]. Youth is associated with the ring of secret animals, with mist, and with poetry. The child does not want to lose these. In *Det store spelet*, Per kills the animal and keeps the farm. In “Slik det står i minnet,” the boy will lose the imagined animals but keep the poetry. As he shovels snow, the imagined animals lift their muzzles and let out a great cry. “Kva det er, veit han ikkje, men det skal bli sterkare sidan, sterkare enn no” (Vesaas 1968, 18) [“He does not know what it is, but it will become stronger later, stronger than now” (Vesaas 2003, 18)]. Here, there is clearer distance between the author and the child in the text, indicated by the use of *han* (he). It is as if the adult offers reassurance to his child self that the poetry within will remain, and become louder with time.

This chapter's final scene seals the child's fate as poet as he rejects the father's inheritance. There is suddenly red in the snow; father and son realize the horse is injured. The father is frustrated, but the horse is resigned: "Er hos mennesket. Er hos mennesket i godt og vondt" (Vesaas 1968, 23) ["He is with man, with man in good and evil times" (Vesaas 2003, 23)]. Sentences without a subject pronoun—per the Norwegian—are common in Vesaas's prose, but here it seems to reinforce the quasi-subjectivity of the animal, whose livelihood is bound up with that of humans. The father taps his deep memory for what to do about the horse's wound: "Hundraårs liv med hest og snø. Lære frå far til son. Skadeleg eller bra. Ervt gjennom tidene" (Vesaas 1968, 23) ["Centuries of life with horses and snow. Lore from father to son. Harmful or wise. Inherited down the ages" (Vesaas 2003, 23)]. However, the father struggles to find a solution. He commands the boy to do something, but the child refuses. There is a standoff between father and son. Finally, the father bandages the horse's leg and they begin the long walk home. Though the child's defiance feels necessary, challenging the father causes him pain. The snow starts up again, but the ring of animals is gone, and the boy's relationship to his father is forever altered. "Det store barnet ber svien i staden" (Vesaas 1968, 30) ["The big boy bears the hurt instead" (Vesaas 2003, 29)], says the narrator, "uformeleg, men med noko i seg som vil setje seg fast for godt" (Vesaas 1968, 30) [a shapeless burden, but one that will settle for good" (Vesaas 2003, 29)]. I read this "shapeless burden" in multiple ways. It is the pain of the loss of childhood, of a kind of original poetic state (the poet and the child are closely linked in Vesaas's work). It is also the pain of severing from the father and from the life that he represents. By the end of "Slik det står i minnet," the child has chosen one path and rejected another. The "shapeless burden" is also the end of a state of multiple possibilities.

"Slik det står i minnet" concludes not with the father or the son, but with the horse.

Er hos mennesket, hos mennesket
 og aldri anna mennesket,
 eg er hesten,
 og slik er min song. (Vesaas 1968, 30)

I am with man,
 and no other than man.
 [...]
 I am the horse,
 and this is my song. (Vesaas 2003, 29)

The two kinds of animals in this text—real and imagined—set up a contrast between childhood, imagination, and poetry on the one hand and adulthood, realism, and physical work on the other. This is the same dichotomy posed in *Det store spelet*, but, says Nylander, "där Per väljer att stanna vid spaden och garden, valde förstås Tarjei att följa i fabeldjurens spår" (2009, 151) [while Per chooses to stay with the spade and the farm, Tarjei clearly chose to follow in the tracks of the fabulous animals]. Yet, it becomes clear over the course of Vesaas's chapter that the workhorse is not strictly aligned with the farmer. Rather, the horse is a figure that

embodies labor, history, and poetry. He stands for a human-animal figuration that can survive into adulthood. Above I identified a shift in “Slik det står i minnet” when the child is suddenly referred to as “det store barnet” after first detecting the horse’s song. Over the course of Vesaas’s text, poetry moves from being located in the imagined animal—whose sounds the narrator describes as compelling but indecipherable and “ikkje vakkert” (Vesaas 1968, 18) [“not [...] beautiful” (Vesaas 2003, 18)]—to the living, working animal. Poetry shifts from vague calling to vocation.

“Hesten” and Reworking the Workhorse

I finally turn my attention to Vesaas’s 1946 poem “Hesten,” a text that is in conversation with both *Det store spelet* and “Slik det står i minnet.” The poem, which consists of ten rhyming stanzas (AABB), opens with the speaker’s daughter kissing him goodnight. The speaker—a writer—sits down to work, but he is startled by the appearance of a horse at the window. The horse’s face fills the pane and evokes memories of the speaker’s past. He recalls a horse that toiled and labored and was shot as “far stod gripen attved” (Vesaas 1946, 14) [“father stood by, moved” (Vesaas 2000, 15)]—a clear parallel to the killing of *Gulen* in *Det store spelet*. The horse at the window seems to pose questions: “Kva gjer du ved detta bordet? Er du klar til møte som barn før, med alt du har?” (Vesaas 1946, 16) [“What are you doing at this table? Are you ready to meet, as the child you were, with everything you are?” (Vesaas 2000, 17)]. These memories and thoughts are not especially welcome. As the speaker says of the horse, “ikkje kjem han med fred” (Vesaas 1946, 14) [“he hasn’t come in peace” (Vesaas 2000, 15)]. Even as the horse awakens in the speaker his “store og dyra barneverd” (Vesaas 1946, 16) [“wide and precious childhood world” (Vesaas 2000, 17)], these thoughts collide with the most immediate aspect of his current reality: his own daughter’s “Far, godnatt!” (Vesaas 1946, 16) [“Father, goodnight!” (Vesaas 2000, 17)]. He still feels the mark of her kiss on his cheek. The poem concludes: “Hesten får stå der han står med spørsmål ute” (Vesaas 1946, 16) [“The horse can stay where he is with his question: shut out” (Vesaas 2000, 17)]. Memories of the speaker’s childhood are juxtaposed with the flesh-and-blood reality of his *own* child. If the two are in competition, the living child wins out. The daughter is the priority now; but also, the living child allows the speaker to repress the remembered one.

Tarjei Vesaas’s son, Olav Vesaas, says his father’s poem “Hesten” is about “om han hadde valt rett” (O. Vesaas 1985, 111) [whether he had chosen correctly] in choosing to become a writer. As with *Det store spelet* and “Slik det står i minnet,” the horse poem shows ambivalence about this choice. Looking at examples from across Vesaas’s life—as a newly married man in 1934, as the father of a young child in 1946, and as an aging man in 1968—it is possible to observe the author negotiating this choice via the figures of the child and the animal. Specifically, as I have shown throughout this section, the animal mediates proximity to the child, including through memory. Especially in “Slik det står i minnet” and “Hesten,” there is a kind of triangulation of adult author, animal, and child: the author works through the animal to get to the remembered child subject. Importantly, this is not always or

only a direct path. On the one hand, in “Hesten,” the appearance of the horse at the window inspires a glance backwards and inwards: the horse “kallar fram” (Vesaas 1946, 14) [“calls up” (Vesaas 2000, 15)] the past, and, “det trenger inn til det som det gjeld om bakom: heilt sinn” (Vesaas 1946, 16) [“it seeps down to what it’s about underneath: the core of him” (Vesaas 2000, 17)]. And yet, the horse at the window, the thing outside and to the side, cannot be forgotten; it pops up throughout the poem, making itself known. The horse initiates the author’s reflective gaze but also distracts the author from it. Similarly, in “Slik det står i minnet,” the horse insists on its own presence. It asserts its song throughout the text, including at the very end. Vesaas’s reconstructions of the remembered child in these texts rely on a sideways gesture towards the animal. This function of the animal helps illuminate the ways in which the autobiographical child might be partially recuperated but never totally integrated into the adult self.

Countless critics have praised Vesaas for his remarkable depictions of children in literature. Kenneth Chapman says Vesaas has “preserved the native poetic ability displayed by children” (1970, 14). Frode Hermundsgård interprets this “native poetic ability” through the lens of primitivism, arguing that Vesaas held a childlike and anti-intellectual view of the world and that the author was interested above all else in “the mystery of growth” (1989, 103).³³ In some ways, Hermundsgård’s views overlap with my own: like primitivism, the model of the queer child rejects a forward-moving model of development. Unlike primitivism, however, queerness does not essentialize, naturalize, or romanticize the child figure, which Hermundsgård often does. Indeed, the child in Vesaas—including the one in “Slik det står i minnet”—is just as often estranged from and out of step with “natural” development as she is native to it. Though the child’s developmental deviations in Vesaas might be read as part and parcel of a broader narrative of growth, these deviations are prominent and persistent, and sometimes unaccountably strange. They are impossible to dismiss and rarely so well assimilated as to be easily forgotten. As I have shown here, the animal plays a critical role in suggesting that “growth” in Vesaas’s authorship is hardly always congruous, progressive, or natural.

Cora Sandel: Horses, Death, and Childhood in *Dyr jeg har kjent*

Cora Sandel (1880–1974) was one of the great Norwegian authors of the twentieth century. She is best known for her “Alberte-trilogien” (1926–1939; *Alberta Trilogy*), which follows the life of Alberte during her upbringing in Northern Norway, through her time as a struggling artist in Paris, to her eventual rejection of motherhood in favor of becoming an author. Sandel is also well known for her short stories, which often feature female characters who live in a world that is blind to their talents and desires and is sometimes violent or deadly. Children are also common characters in these stories, which I further address below. Though I will refer to the author here as Cora Sandel, this was a penname for the woman born Sara Fabricius. As Sandel’s

³³ Nylander and others have deconstructed “myten” [the myth] of Vesaas as an anti-intellectual figure (Nylander 2009, 147).

biographer Janneken Øverland points out, Sandel's use of a penname was one of the ways in which the author distanced herself from her fiction (Øverland 1995, 13). And yet, Sandel's works often draw on her personal life and experiences, not least *Dyr jeg har kjent* (1945; *Animals I Have Known*), the text considered here and by far Sandel's most autobiographical. In *Dyr jeg har kjent*, the aging author recounts memories from throughout her life, each connected in some way to an animal: a toy horse, a domesticated squirrel, a Parisian cat, and more. Various critics have suggested that the text's animals are accessories to, or even camouflage for, the book's true subject: the author herself. I resist this claim. With a focus on the text's first chapter about the author's early years, I argue that *Dyr jeg har kjent* is a text in which the autobiographical child is bound up with the animal subject on a trajectory whose termination is the death of childhood. Specifically, I suggest that the animal is often the child's ally in her confrontation with adults and with the prospect of growing up, and I examine the queer implications of this allyship. In what follows I first consider the role of the child and the animal in Sandel's broader authorship. I then address the question of genre in *Dyr jeg har kjent* before turning my attention to the text itself.

Allies and Friends: Children and Animals in Sandel's Authorship

The child is a prominent figure in Cora Sandel's short stories. These stories often pit children against adults in suggesting that the egocentricity, negligence, and violence of adults harm the child. In this sense, Sandel's literary treatment of the child is in keeping with Hoel's in *Veien til verdens ende*: adults more often threaten the child's healthy development than they protect and promote it. In Sandel's story "Drama i utkant i natt" (1932; *Drama on the Outskirts Last Night*), a man strangles his ex-wife in a fit of rage while his crying child flees to the street. In "Barnet" (1935; "The Child"), which was written in the lead-up to Sandel's divorce from the Swedish sculptor Anders Jönsson (Øverland 2005, 15), the child's illusion of security is destroyed when he detects a rift between his parents. In "Hvad er sannhet?" ([1940–45] 1973; *What is Truth?*), a child learns that while adults lie with impunity, children are punished for lying, leaving her to conclude, "løgnen er et privilegium de voksne vil ha for sig selv" ([1940–45] 1973, 139) [lying is a privilege adults keep for themselves].³⁴ And in the excellent short story, "Barnet som elsket veier" ([1947] 1973; "The Child Who Loved Roads"), an adolescent girl confronts the confines of femininity and adulthood. Adults want the girl to walk—not run—and to wear long skirts like a lady. One day a boy tells the child, "du er bare e pike" ([1947] 1973, 145) [you're only a girl], and she experiences the sickening oppression of being female for the first time. Cora Sandel experienced something similar: it was not until the author was forced to cease her formal education after middle school that she felt the limitations of being a girl (Øverland, 2005 12). "Barnet som elsket veier" ends with the child spurning adult expectations in favor of running along the open road. Like Anders at the end of *Veien til verdens ende*, the child in Sandel's story rejects the

³⁴ "Hvad er sannhet?" was written in an undated manuscript between 1940-45.

possibility of a future in her community, and perhaps the possibility of a future altogether.

As Øverland points out, two significant motifs emerge in Sandel's representation of the child in fiction: the child's freedom is connected to movement and escaping adult influence on the one hand and to the importance of language and truth-telling on the other (Øverland 1983, 29–30). These motifs are evoked in a passage Sandel composed for the Norwegian women's magazine, *Urd*, in 1934 (Øverland 1983, 19). The autobiographical passage juxtaposes two childhood memories: one of a photograph, one of a word. In the first memory, a six-month-old Sandel is told she will have to sit still for a photograph. The young child experiences this as if "jeg skal bli sittende i fotografiet for alle tider, ikke få røre mig mer, ikke gå, ikke springe" (Øverland 1983, 19) [I will have to sit for the photograph forever, not allowed to move anymore, or walk, or jump]. ("Springe" is also a keyword for the child in "Barnet som elsket veier.") Sandel's mother must hold her in place so that she does not kick and scream while the photograph is taken. This is a striking account for a couple of reasons. First, the association of portrait photography with memorialization and death is accentuated here by the mother's command to sit still, which contradicts the innate restlessness of the child. The connection between childhood and mobility on the one hand, and adulthood and stasis—or even death—on the other, is hard to miss and has implications for my later discussion of the end of childhood in *Dyr jeg har kjent*. Second, the "memory" here is not really Sandel's own. It is the kind of memory that Catherine E. Snow says parents provide to the child as they help to "[produce] chapters of the child's autobiography" (1990, 213). With time, suggests Snow, children move from being "characters" in their autobiographies to "authors" of their autobiographies. In the *Urd* passage, Sandel acknowledges that the memory is not her "own," since she does not personally recall the moment, and yet, I argue, she *owns* the memory. In the processes of co-construction and reconstruction of the child's earliest years, this is among the moments that come to define Sandel's autobiographical child self.

The second memory described in the *Urd* passage is a happy one. In this memory, the very young Sandel's grandfather shows her a flower and tells her it is "sjelden" (rare). The author does not remember what the flower looked like, but she does remember her delight at learning a new word: *sjelden* (whose very definition would seem to reinforce its exceptionality). This is a moment of pleasure at the discovery of language—a common kind of memory in the autobiographies of authors. Indeed, a similar moment occurs in *Veien til verdens ende* when Anders stumbles upon the concept of rhyme when he spontaneously recites, "Tora, Tora! Ta på deg skoa!" (Hoel 1933, 47–8) ["Tora, Tora, boo! Go put on your shoe!" (Hoel 1995, 45–6)].³⁵ The experience is revelatory; it is also a source of unrepressed development: "Han hadde aldri kjent noe slikt. Det var som han vokste der han stod" (Hoel 1933, 48) ["He had never known anything like it before. He felt as if he was growing moment by moment" (Hoel 1995, 45)]. This is one of the rare moments of happiness in Hoel's text. Happy moments for the child are somewhat more common in Sandel's works, and especially in *Dyr jeg har kjent*. Indeed, Sandel's early

³⁵ Tora is Anders's sister. He is angry with her and wants her to put on a shoe that is filled with water.

childhood appears to have been relatively content (Øverland 1983, 23). Still, *Dyr jeg har kjent* contains the key themes reflected in Sandel's fiction about the child discussed above: the child's desire for freedom, her rejection of adult hypocrisy, and a resistance to growing up.

While the child's relationship to adults in Sandel's authorship is often antagonistic, Øverland suggests that the child's relationship to animals and nature in Sandel's works is always positive (Øverland 1983, 29). One of my key claims with respect to *Dyr jeg har kjent* is that the child and the animal are often allies against the domesticating forces of adults and human society. This echoes an argument I made in the first chapter of this dissertation, in which I evoked Stewart and Cole's notion that, as similarly oppressed subjects, children and animals might become partners in subverting patriarchal and humanist norms. Interestingly, *Dyr jeg har kjent* is not the first text in which Sandel evoked the vulnerability and subjectivity of animals. Sandel was a promoter of animal protections throughout her life and in a handful of short narratives written in her twenties, she denounced human mistreatment of animals. In "Bredflabben" (1901 [1973]; The Monkfish), an ugly fish is mocked by his fellow sea creatures and is later crushed by a human foot. For the story "Isbjørnene" (1904 [1973]; The Polar Bears), Sandel drew on her real-life experience of hearing the cries of caged polar bears on the pier in Tromsø (Øverland 1995, 239). Though these texts might be called overly sentimental and moralizing, they are in keeping with turn-of-the century efforts across Europe and the United States to use pathos to garner public support for emerging animal rights movements. Moreover, they reflect Sandel's lifelong concern with representing the perspectives of marginalized subjects.

Dyr jeg har kjent: An Autobiographical Text About Animals

Dyr jeg har kjent came out in 1945, the same year in which Sandel's much better known (and more highly regarded) text, *Kranes konditori* (*Krane's Café*), was also published. Sandel had spent the war years in Sweden, during which time she published only one short story; by 1945, she was ready for a literary comeback. Sandel expressed hesitation to her publisher about which of the two texts should be published first. She worried about making her comeback with "bare en liten bok om katter og kanarifugler" (Øverland 1983, 206) [just a little book about cats and canaries]. By contrast, she said *Kranes konditori*, a novel about a seamstress who rejects her work in favor of developing a relationship with a Swedish man at a local café, was about people and was "alvorlig ment" (Øverland 1995, 321) [seriously meant]. Clearly Sandel was aware of how a book about childhood and animals could hurt her reputation as a heavyweight author. In fact, Sandel was nervous about the reception of both texts, but her concern was for naught. *Kranes konditori* was very well received and became Sandel's most popular novel, while *Dyr jeg har kjent* was widely praised for its warmth and humor as well as for its subtlety. In this section I consider the text's genre, structure, and tone in making the case that *Dyr jeg har kjent* is an autobiographical text about animals.

Dyr jeg har kjent is a relatively short text (120 pages) consisting of a foreword and six chapters. The first two chapters, "De første dyrene" (The First

Animals) and “Papen” (The Parrot) follow the narrator’s childhood and upbringing, while the remaining chapters are non-chronological and offer “glimt inn i ulike livsfaser” [glimpses into various phases (of the narrator’s) life] (Aamotsbakken 1998, 112). The “animals” that the narrator has “known” include an array of horses (toy horses, pretend horses, and live ones), a neglected pet parrot who goes crazy in a cage, a mother squirrel—“Fru Ekorn”—who abandons her babies in the narrator’s apartment three years running, a pair of “married” canaries and wartime cats from Paris and Florence. Sandel critics point to how *Dyr jeg har kjent* represents a striking departure from the author’s other works in terms of tone. It is both more humorous and more melancholy, less serious and more moralizing. The literary historian Harald Beyer described *Dyr jeg har kjent* as “en sjarmerende liten bok” (Billing 2002, 165) [a charming little book]. While the text is indeed charming, its use of irony and uncertain genre complicate Beyer’s critique.

Despite an uptick in Sandel scholarship in the last couple of decades, there are only two scholarly essays dedicated to *Dyr jeg har kjent*—an article by Bente Aamotsbakken (1998) and a book section by AnnaCarin Billing (2002). Both address questions of genre. Though Sandel’s biographers have established that *Dyr jeg har kjent* is closely based on events in Sandel’s life,³⁶ the text is hardly a conventional autobiography. Critics have variably referred to the text as a collection of short stories, a memoir, a book of memories, and a children’s book.³⁷ Billing is interested in the text’s truth-value as part of her broader investigation of truth in Sandel’s short stories. For Billing, Sandel’s truth lies not in claims to fact but with “upplevelsens autenticitet” (2002, 167) [the authenticity of experience], which Billing locates in Sandel’s fiction generally. I agree with Billing that the adult writer’s memory in *Dyr jeg har kjent* functions as a kind of “fiktiviserande raster” (2002, 176) [fictionalizing framework], though I think she goes too far in suggesting that the text’s chapters can be read as short stories alongside Sandel’s others. Given the specificity of the text’s autobiographical content, I think Aamotsbakken is closer to the mark in calling *Dyr jeg har kjent*, “en type fragmentarisk, autobiografisk roman” (1998, 112) [a kind of fragmented, autobiographical novel].

Like Aamotsbakken and Billing, I find it important to discuss *Dyr jeg har kjent* in context of Philippe Lejeune’s notion of the “autobiographical pact” (1989). According to Lejeune, in order to qualify as autobiography, a text’s author, narrator, and protagonist/main figure must share the same name; the “contractual” relationship between author and reader should give the reader confidence in the autobiography’s truth-value.³⁸ *Dyr jeg har kjent* does not quite live up to this pact. As stated, Cora Sandel is a pseudonym: the author’s name on the book’s cover is not the

³⁶ See biographies by Solumsmoen (1957) and Øverland (1983, 1995). As Billing puts it, the stories in the text have “så starkt selvbiografiske drag att de närmar sig memoarformen” (2002, 165) [such strong autobiographical traits that they approach memoir].

³⁷ Cora Sandel wanted *Dyr jeg har kjent* to be sold as a children’s book. Her publisher disagreed; the subtitle—“stories for young and old”—was a compromise (Billing 2002, 166). Sandel thought *Dyr jeg har kjent* could have been “kanskje til og med en litt ny slags barnebok” (Solumsmoen 1957, 164) [maybe even a slightly new kind of children’s book]—namely, one that was not too “skolemesteraktig” (Øverland 1983) [pedantic].

³⁸ See “The Autobiographical Pact” in Lejeune (1989).

name of the private person, Sara Fabricius. Moreover, the narrator in *Dyr jeg har kjent* never names herself (though the narrator's father is referred to as "Fabricius"). Aamotsbakken and Billing understand this distance between the author Cora Sandel and the person Sara Fabricius as a function of Sandel's desire to keep her private life out of her texts. In fact, both scholars claim that Sandel is "hiding" in *Dyr jeg har kjent*, where stories about animals provide cover for the author's private life and truest self (Aamotsbakken 1998, 112; Billing 2002, 177). It is true that the text's narrator operates more often as a slightly removed storyteller than as the central—let alone confessional—subject of the text. As Aamotsbakken puts it, "tekstens jeg er svært tilbaketrukket" (1998; 98) [the text's I is very withdrawn]. Though Sandel could be disparaging about biographical texts,³⁹ she was deeply interested in life stories—her own and those of others—and she consumed the biographies of fellow female authors such as Victoria Benedictsson and Karin Boye with "skrekkblandet fryd" (Øverland 1995, 320) [joy mixed with horror]. As Øverland suggests, Sandel's relationship to autobiography was one of ambivalence.

This ambivalence is evoked in the title and foreword of Sandel's text. The text's full title—*Dyr jeg har kjent: historier for ung og gammel* (Animals I Have Known: Stories for Young and Old)—contains a kind of contradiction. The "jeg" of the title implies autobiography (per Lejeune), while the word "historier" evokes the idea of fiction. The foreword is likewise problematic in addressing the question of truth. It seems to undermine its claims even as it makes them. Sandel writes:

Disse små fortellinger om dyr jeg har kjent, er alt annet enn merkelige. Alle som er glad i dyr og får dem glad i sig, kan oppleve like meget og mere til. Men de er sanne. Intet er overdrevet, intet oppdiktet. Og sannheten har for mange sin egen tiltrekning, hvor enkel den enn er. Ikke minst for de unge, de yngste, og de gamle. (Sandel 1945a, 7)

(These little stories about animals I have known are anything but strange. Anyone who loves animals and who gets animals to love them can experience as much, and even more. But they are true. Nothing is exaggerated, nothing made up. And truth has its attraction for many, simple though it may be. Not least for young people, small children, and the old.)

These are rich little paragraphs. As Billing argues, Sandel's use of the word "truth" here and throughout her authorship functions "oftast som en signal till läsaren om att vara på sin vakt" (2002, 169) [most often as a signal to the reader to be on guard]. Indeed, Sandel's claim to truth in the foreword feels decidedly tongue-in-cheek, while her suggestion that truth, per se, is important to the child appears sincere and is in keeping with that theme in her prior authorship. Citing Gennette's work on paratext, Aamotsbakken and Billing rightly argue that the title and foreword of Sandel's text significantly influence the reader's reception of the text as a whole (Aamotsbakken 1998, 100–101; Billing 2002, 168). The fluctuating tone in the foreword and the ambiguous status of the author-narrator create a sense of playful uncertainty. In fact, the tone throughout Sandel's text "vacklar" [wavers] as

³⁹ Sandel once compared reading biographies to the memory of seeing a poorly stuffed elephant at a natural history museum: both are caricature (Øverland 1995, 355).

the narrator shifts between addressing the child and addressing the adult, between nostalgia and moralizing, between irony and sincerity (Billing 2002, 167).

It is worth briefly addressing the “moralizing” tone in *Dyr jeg har kjent*, as I argue it does more than to render the text “charming.” This tone comes through in the narrator’s many aphoristic formulations, such as, “få mennesker minnes vi med større glede enn dem som skjønnte at leken i grunnen var alvor” (Sandel 1945, 22) [we remember few people with greater happiness than those who understood that play is actually serious] and “at [dyr] mangel gang bedre ved hvad vi tenker om dem, enn vi, hvad de tenker om oss, er utenfor all tvil” (Sandel 1945a, 34) [that animals often know better what we think of them, than we know what they think of us, is without a doubt]. For Billing, the “truth” of the text is distilled in these statements (2002, 188); for Aamotsbakken, these aphoristic moments bring the usually withdrawn narrator into the foreground (1998, 111). Both scholars rightly suggest that the aphoristic phrases evoke the genre of parables or fables. Yet, I do not agree with their assessment that the animals in Sandel’s text function primarily to say something about people, nor that these animals offer a backdrop against which human life plays out.⁴⁰ Their positions are in keeping with a common claim about fables and fairytales—namely, that the animals in these texts serve to teach us something about our (human) selves. Animal studies scholars have effectively challenged this view in pointing to how the very presence of animals in literary texts troubles human-animal dichotomies.⁴¹ Indeed, part of my aim in this section and chapter is to demonstrate that the often overlooked presence of the animal in autobiographies can (and likely often does⁴²) play a critical role in the construction of life narratives—both the “moving forward” (i.e., development) and the “looking back” (i.e., writing and reflection). Moreover, Sandel’s text is deeply concerned with animal subjects and how their lives are intertwined with human ones. Many of the narrator’s aphoristic statements demonstrate this concern. For example, after the family parrot has been driven mad by his life in captivity, the narrator states, “også vi blir anderledes, når vi settes i bur ” (Sandel 1945a, 41) [We (humans), too, become altered when put in cage]. At various points in the text the narrator almost quips that “en lett, fort død” [an easy, quick death] is often the most merciful

⁴⁰ “Dyrehistoriene blir da å se på som kamouflasjehistorier, nærmest parabler som er ment å utsi noe om menneskelivet generelt” (Aamotsbakken 1998, 112) [The animal stories can thus be seen as stories in camouflage, most like parables, which are meant to say something about human life in general]. “De handlar lika mycket om människor, och djurens live framstår närmast som en bakgrund eller til och med som en allegori för mänskligt liv” (Billing 2002, 184) [They are just as much about humans, and the animals’ lives are presented mostly as a background or even as an allegory for human life].

⁴¹ Ratelle maintains that children’s texts “present the boundary between humans and animals as, at best, permeable and in a state of continual flux” (2015, 4). Jaques suggests, “the symbolic function of animals always operates in tandem with their animal nature and can never be fully divorced from it, offering comment upon their real-world counterparts in a mode that might align with or, as often as not, defy the ‘meaning’ of the text” (2017, 46).

⁴² This is a question for further research, though prominent autobiographies of childhood featuring the animal readily come to mind: the otter is a critical figure in Walter Benjamin’s *Berlin Childhood around 1900* (2006); Elsner considers the intersection of animals, ethics, and death in Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* (2016).

outcome for an animal. The tone in these statements is deceptively lighthearted. Sandel uses ironic understatement to make some serious claims: captivity ruins subjects human and nonhuman; it is sometimes worse to live and suffer than it is to die. To borrow Sandel's phrase in describing *Krandes Konditori*, I take these statements as "alvorlig ment" [seriously meant]. *Dyr jeg har kjent* is a text that is both moralizing and deeply moral.

I finally want to consider a paratextual element of Sandel's text, which sheds further light on its genre. In his review of *Dyr jeg har kjent* from 1946, Aksel Sandemose suggests something similar to Billing's argument about "truth." Regarding the text, Sandemose writes, "det nærmeste en kommer sannheten, det er i diktningen, og Cora Sandel er en stor dikter" (Øverland 1983, 207) [the closest one can come to the truth is in fiction, and Cora Sandel is a great storyteller]. Specifically, Sandemose takes up the question of the only photograph in *Dyr jeg har kjent*. It is a photograph of a cat and is located just after the book's title page. Though the photograph is not labeled, the description of the narrator's cat Putekass⁴³ in the chapter "To katter i Paris og en i Firenze" [Two Cats in Paris and One in Florence] matches the picture: "Den ligger på en stråstol og ser rett på en. Antrekket er hvit, med et dekken av svartstripet grått over rygg, hale, fremover ørene og et stykke ned i pannen" (Sandel 1945a, 87) [It is lying on a straw chair and looks directly at you. Its face is white, with a covering of black-striped gray over its back, tail, ears, and a bit down the forehead] (Figure 4). Putekass is a beloved pet: he is fed milk from a teaspoon as a kitten; he is brushed daily; he is admired for his strength and grace. When the narrator departs France for Italy in the fall of 1913, she leaves Putekass with a neighbor, intending to return one year later. But with the outbreak of World War I, she cannot come back, and in her absence, Putekass runs away. The narrator considers the cat "et krigens offer" (Sandel 1945a, 95) [a victim of war]. Sandemose suggests that there is discord between Sandel's loving and particular account of Putekass on the one hand, and the objective rendering of the cat in the photograph on the other. The truth of the cat for Sandemose is not in the picture but in Sandel's words. Sandemose writes, "er bildet av katta sant, da er ikke teksten det—*men teksten er sann*. Det er katta som ligger der og juger" (Øverland 1983, 207) [if the picture of the cat is true, then the text is not—but the text is true. It is the cat who lies there, lying (i.e. telling lies)]. I agree with Sandemose that there is something dissonant and even unsettling about the juxtaposition of these two representations of the cat. This is especially the case because the image of the cat is given primacy in its location among the book's first pages, yet it is not accounted for until the text's fifth chapter. Unlike Sandemose, however, I do not think the cat in the picture is "lying." Rather, I argue the photograph insists on the biography of the animal, and further insists on the historical animal's role in the author's autobiography. Sandel's text creates both critical connection and critical distance between the cat's photograph and its narrative, between stories and life.

⁴³ The name came about when someone misspoke and called the cat "Putekass" instead of "Pusekatt" [pussy cat] (Sandel 1945a, 83).

Figure 4
Putekass (Sandel 1945, 3)



The cat's portrait in *Dyr jeg har kjent* might also be read in simpler terms, as a memorial or dedication to a beloved pet. I think it is that, but given its place in an autobiographical text, the photograph is also striking for what it is not—namely, a portrait of the author. As Linda Haverty Rugg argues, author photographs in autobiographies can “cut both ways” as they “disrupt the singularity of the autobiographical pact by pointing to a plurality of selves” on the one hand, and “insist on something material, the *embodied* subject, the unification [...] of author, name, *and* body” on the other (2005, 13). Obviously, the picture of the cat in *Dyr jeg har kjent* does not give the reader a sense of “unification of author, name, *and* body” since the body pictured is not Sandel's. In fact, we might read the presence of the cat's photograph as a kind of joke—a playful rebuke to the conventions of a genre about whose expectations for self-disclosure Sandel felt deeply ambivalent. I also connect the exclusion of the author's portrait here to the anecdote above about the six-month-old Sandel's disdain at being forced to have her photograph taken. That experience represented for Sandel a loss of mobility and control. Writing and narrative offer the temporal fluidity and physical mobility the photograph denies; in the autobiographical text, the author asserts control over her image through language. Still, I argue that the placement of the cat's photograph where the reader might reasonably expect the writer's portrait at least wryly hints at the intertwining of the two subjects: author and animal. Importantly, this is reflected in the text's title, which presents an intriguing compound subject: *Animals I Have Known*. Neither the “animals” nor the “I” stand alone, they are bound up in the title's very syntax. The presence of the cat's portrait makes the reader wonder about the absence of the author's. It evokes the reader's curiosity about the human subject while drawing attention to the animal one. In the following section, I examine how these subjects are intertwined in the first chapter of *Dyr jeg har kjent*.

“De første dyrene”: The Autobiographical Child and Horses

The first chapter of *Dyr jeg har kjent* is called “De første dyrene: Et kapittel som ikke bare er om dyr” (Sandel 1945a, 9) [The First Animals: A Chapter That Is Not Only About Animals]. In addition to horses, dogs, leeches, and hens the chapter is also about fathers, mothers, aunts, and—not least—the autobiographical child. The chapter’s title thus speaks to the argument I made above: this is a text in which the author’s story is bound up with the stories of animals. As Billing points out, “De første dyrene” is more personally revealing than the other chapters of *Dyr jeg har kjent*, including in its use of pronouns: the “jeg” [I] of this chapter is largely replaced by the less personal “we” [vi] in subsequent chapters (2002, 174). Billing suggests Sandel’s use of the depersonalizing “we” grants her remembered adult self a degree of protection she does not feel is necessary for the remembered child, since childhood is a phase of life both sufficiently distant and distinct from that of the present, writing adult (2002, 174). I would add that Sandel’s intimate portrayal of the autobiographical child can be understood as an extension of her nuanced treatment of the child subject in her prior authorship. The chapter’s first paragraph opens the narrative in the authors’ early years:

“De aller første var elleve trehester, så beretter familiekrøniken. Selv husker jeg bare at de var mange. Det var før jeg kunde telle. Det var i Huitfeldts gate nummer fem.” (Sandel 1945a, 9)

(The very first animals were eleven wooden horses, so tells the family chronicle. I myself only remember that they were many. It was before I could count. This was at 5 Huitfeldts Street.)

This paragraph is striking for its evocation of numbers, counting, and memory. Starting with the last sentence, the paragraph places the family at an address in Oslo, which is indeed where Sandel spent her early years before the family moved to Tromsø. The narrator does not give a specific age for the child at this moment in time, but rather uses an indicator that a child herself might use: “it was before I could count.” This statement evokes the layered significance of counting for the act of remembering the child. Counting is not only a skill that represents a turning point in the child’s development; it is also the kind of skill that would allow the child to mark time at all. Thus, “before I could count” represents time before time, a kind of prehistory for the child. To account for this prehistory, the narrator relies in part on “the family chronicle.” As in the *Urd* passage above, Sandel here evokes the notion of collective memory, in which the growing child (or recollecting adult) relies on information from parents and others to co-construct and reconstruct the past. According to Snow (1990), with time the child shifts from the role of character in, to author of, her life story. I want to suggest that the remembered child may return to a kind of character status in the adult’s telling. This is often true of how adults tell stories from their childhoods—that is, in oral, everyday expressions of autobiography; it is perhaps especially true of autobiographical texts about children that are written and published, as the child figures in these texts are implicated in formal constructs of narrative. In either case, I see a difference between the

autobiographical child “character” constructed by parents and other adults for the growing child on the one hand and the autobiographical child “character” constructed by the telling or writing adult on the other. In the latter situation—and, importantly for Sandel, as I have suggested—the telling or writing adult has arrived at a point in life in which she is largely, if not exclusively, the author of the autobiographical child self. There is a confluence of being (or having been) the child person and of owning that child’s story.

The wooden horses of the first paragraph in “De første dyrene” are among the many horses that impacted the narrator’s life as a child. In fact, the autobiographical child in Sandel’s text is rather horse-obsessed. As the narrator says, “være sammen med hester, bestandig ri dem, stelle dem, danse på ryggen av dem, var min første store drøm her i livet” (Sandel 1945a, 11) [to be with horses, to constantly ride them, take care of them, to dance on their backs—this was my first great dream in life]. The narrator further states, “dukker forstod jeg mig ikke på. Av hester fikk jeg aldri for mange” (Sandel 1945a, 10) [I did not understand dolls but I could never get enough of horses]. The female child’s preference for horses over dolls (and boys) is a theme I examine in depth in the following chapter of this dissertation. There I argue that the “horse-crazy” girl can be understood as queer for her rejection of heterosexual and human norms in favor of the animal. Though the child in *Dyr jeg har kjent* eventually “outgrows” her horse obsession, Sandel’s juxtaposition of the child’s interest in horses and disinterest in dolls does, in my reading, pose a challenge to normative female upbringing (in which dolls are a key tool in training the girl for motherhood). Indeed, the child in this chapter is often allied with horses against the will of adults and social pressures to grow up. Below, I consider three instances of the child-horse alliance: the child and the wooden horse, the child as a horse, and the child’s relationship to live horses.

To begin, the narrator recounts the story of her prized wooden horse, Raberhesten.⁴⁴ Raberhesten was “brun, sylinderformet og aldeles flat bak, med sal og bissel malt direkte på kroppen og med ildrøde nesebor” (Sandel 1945a, 9) [brown, cylindrical, and completely flat in the rear, with a saddle and bridle painted directly on his body and with fiery red nostrils]. The horse was big enough for the child to sit on and it had a tail of real horsehair. The narrator explains that she used to cut Raberhesten’s tail, having seen a coachman do the same to his horses. She did so under the assumption that cutting hair makes it grow faster, a belief instilled in her by adults who used this explanation to convince the child to get regular haircuts herself. “Det blev mig forsikret at jeg da fortere skulle få flette og bli stor” (Sandel 1945a, 9) [I was assured that I would thus more quickly get braids and grow up]. But of course, the toy horse’s tail does not grow back. “At en ikke uten videre kunde bygge på hvad de voksne sa og gjorde, fikk jeg bittert erfare,” [That one could not, as a matter of course, rely on what adults said and did, was a bitter experience for me]” says the narrator, “med hestens hale tok det en bedrøvelig og uopprettelig vending. Ikke blev det rare greiene med fletten heller, ikke på lenge” (Sandel 1945a,

⁴⁴ This seems to be a truncation of “Araberhesten” [Arabian horse], a breed the child admired (Sandel 1945a, 9).

9–10) [things took a sad and irreversible turn with the horse’s tail. It wasn’t much better with my braids, not for a long time].

This is a compelling passage. As Billing points out, it highlights the theme of adult lies and deception, which is as important for this text as it is for many of Sandel’s short stories (2002, 172). Indeed, the first chapter of *Dyr jeg har kjent* contains various anecdotes that reflect this theme: the child is told that nightingales only sing when children sleep—a lie meant to keep the child in bed (Sandel 1945a, 18); the child is not disabused of the notion that her pet chickens have simply disappeared until she stumbles upon a pile of their dead bodies (Sandel 1945a, 24). In these examples, the animal becomes a medium for conveying lies and truth, with the animal corpse imparting the ultimate truth of mortality. And, it is not only the child who doubts the “voksne” [adults] in Sandel’s text; “de gamle” [the elderly] are also suspicious of adult motives. The narrator—and by extension, the author—clearly counts herself among “de gamle,” thus affiliating herself with the position of the child. This kinship is evoked throughout *Dyr jeg har kjent*, as it is in the text’s subtitle: “stories for young and old.” “Hvem av oss som nå er gamle, har ikke vært full av mistro til de voksne og deres verden?” [Who among those of us who are now old has not been full of mistrust towards adults and their world?], asks the narrator, “de var ikke til å stole på, det viste sig mere og mere” (Sandel 1945a, 24) [they were not to be trusted; that became increasingly clear].

The failure of Raberhesten’s tail to regrow is, for the child, evidence that adults’ claims cannot be trusted. It is also evidence of something murkier and perhaps unsettling for the child: the horse’s tail does not regrow because the horse is not alive. That Sandel does not make this point explicit seems to lend credence to the remembered child’s understanding of the toy horse as a kind of living being. (I return to this idea in the following chapter with respect to the hobbyhorse, drawing on Jane Bennett’s concept of “vibrant matter.”) The notion of the toy horse as a real and feeling subject is reinforced when the narrator later says that her eventual abandonment of Raberhesten for a new toy constituted a “[troløs] og fullstendig” (Sandel 1945a, 11) [treacherous and complete] betrayal. In *When Toys Come Alive* (1994), Lois Rostow Kuznets considers the various functions of toys in literature; some of her concepts are useful here. On the one hand, when the child in Sandel’s text cuts Raberhesten’s tail, she creates a parallel between herself and the toy horse, hoping that its hair will grow faster just like hers was promised to. On the other hand, the child exerts a form of violence and control over the toy animal when she cuts its tail. Kuznet suggests that human manipulation of toys can be understood to represent “all the temptations and responsibilities of power” (1994, 2). I read the child in Sandel’s text as trying to have it both ways with Raberhesten: by cutting his tail, she creates a kind of peer who shares in her suffering; at the same time, she exerts on the horse precisely the kind of power that adults have over her, and that she does not have over herself. Kuznet suggests that toys in literature “often function as *subversive* forces acting out crises of individual development generally repressed by modern society” (1994, 7). Though Raberhesten does not “act out” on his own, the child acts through the toy horse to subvert adult expectations and control.

The second horse figure I will consider is the one the narrator describes as “den som bare jeg visste om” (Sandel 1945a, 12) [the one that only I knew about]. This is the horse that the child herself becomes, the horse that she pretends to be. “Jeg travet og galopperte. [...] Lange avstander avskrekket mig aldri, tvert om. Jeg var hest hele veien, min egen, levende hest” (Sandel 1945a, 12–13) [I trotted and galloped. Long distances never deterred me—just the opposite. I was a horse the whole way, my own living horse]. The child plays horse only in private; being the horse is an expression of freedom outside the realm of adult supervision. In one scene, the child plays horse alone in a large park, whose long pathways and many nooks and crannies “var som lagt der til å leke hest i” (Sandel 1945a, 20) [were as if made for playing horse]. In the park there is an armory, and “i den lange skyggen fra arsenalet bodde uhyggen. Etsteds skal den bo for et barn, om dets verden skal være fullstendig” (Sandel 1945a, 20) [in the long shadow of the armory lived the uncanny. The uncanny must dwell somewhere for the child if its world is to be complete]. The narrator’s claim that children require the uncanny resonates with Hoel’s project in *Veien til verdens ende*: both authors suggest that the child must be allowed to explore the frightening, repressed, and unpleasant aspects of the psyche and of life. The difference between Hoel’s Anders and Sandel’s autobiographical child is that the latter finds some freedom to do so, playing among the armory’s shadows. However, this play is disrupted by an adult:

Arsenalet var fullt av geværer. En mann som het Johan tok mig en gang med dit inn, løftet for spøk et ned av stativet det stod i, siktet på mig, spente hanen og trykte av. Det kom bare et lite klikk, men det var nok. Jeg fikk en livslang, rotfestet skrekk for skytevåpen. (Sandel 1945a, 20)

(The armory was full of guns. A man named Johan once took me inside, and, as a joke, took one down from its stand, aimed at me, cocked the gun and pulled the trigger. There was just a little click, but that was enough. It gave me a lifelong, deeply rooted fear of firearms.)

This scene stages striking contrasts: between the open space outdoors and the confined space indoors, between the female child and the male adult, between free play and a cruel joke. Though Sandel does not say as much in the text, the gender dynamic here makes the scenario especially frightening, as a man, armed with a symbolically phallic weapon, threatens (falsely, but terrifyingly for the child) a girl. Elsewhere in *Dyr jeg har kjent*, the child expresses a preference for men over women—mostly, it would seem, for the freedom of movement and expression men enjoy. This scene reveals to the child an aspect of masculinity that is not only undesirable but dangerous.

Beyond toy horses and the horse that is the child herself, the narrator in *Dyr jeg har kjent* recounts various memories with real, live horses. As in the examples above, the child feels a kinship with horses that sets her apart from adults. For example, the child wonders why adults should be allowed to go on so many carriage rides when they do not even appreciate the horse pulling the cart—which was for her the whole point. When she gets to join the adults one day, she is dismayed at the adults’ lack of interest in the animal. “Det var jeg som var glad i den, jeg som satt og passet på hvordan den holdt ørene sine. Jeg som holdt øye med de små skjelvingene

gjennom nakkeskinnet på den og lyttet etter prustingen dens” (Sandel 1945a, 28) [It was I who loved it, I who sat and paid attention to how it held its ears. I who kept my eye on the small tremors through the scruff of its neck and listened to its snorting]. The child is clearly attuned to the physicality of the horse—an awareness that becomes all the more acute when she eventually gets to ride horseback. The experience is euphoric. “Sitte så høyt, vugget av det levende, varme, usigelig tiltrekkende store dyret, holde tømmer, klappe den faste, gode hestehalsen, kjenne den mot håndflaten, fylte mig altsammen med triumferende fryd” (Sandel 1945a, 29) [To sit up so high, cradled by the living, warm, unspeakably attractive large animal; to hold the reins, to stroke the solid, fine horse neck, to feel it against my palm, filled me with triumphant joy]. While riding the horse, she experiences her perspective as aligned with that of the animal: “Jeg opplevde veien slik jeg tenker mig hesten opplever den” (Sandel 1945a, 30) [I experienced the road the way I imagine the horse experiences it]. While the adults surrounding the child see the horse in purely utilitarian terms—as a means of transportation—the child not only admires the animal but rejoices at the prospect of sharing its bodily experience.

Certain adults—namely, women—do not want the child getting too close to horses. These women are the “pene, sirlige, uhyre engstelige damer, mor, mormor og mange tanter” (Sandel 1945a, 13) [pretty, refined, extremely anxious ladies—mother, grandmother, and many aunts]. They are “utrolig redde for større dyr” (Sandel 1945a, 14) [incredibly frightened of large animals] and show none of the child’s admiration for horses. The exception is “Tante Kamma” [Aunt Kamma]. Tante Kamma drives horses fearlessly and with skill; the child admires her from a distance: “Over alle grenser beundret jeg henne der hun satt, med tykke grå hansker på hendene, og manøvrerte svepe og tømmer. Som henne vilde jeg være når jeg blev stor, siden det nå engang for alle så håpløst ut med sirkus” (Sandel 1945a, 14) [I admired her beyond all reason as she sat there, with thick gray gloves on her hands, and maneuvered the whip and reins. I wanted to be like her when I grew up, since now, at long last, things looked hopeless with the circus]. To ride horseback in the circus was one of the child’s earliest dreams; the slightly older child portrayed at this point in the narrative has lost hope that this dream is tenable and turns instead to the example of Tante Kamma: if growing up is inevitable, the text seems to suggest, then to be like Tante Kamma is the next best option. The role of aunts here is striking. Feminist scholarship on aunts (including literary aunts) shows how aunts can be figures of stodginess and repression on the one hand and figures of female liberation on the other, presenting girls with alternatives to the traditional female paths of marriage and mothering.⁴⁵ While most of the child’s aunts are of the repressive variety, Tante Kamma defies the norm: “Tante Kamma var ikke redd hester. De var tvert om hennes liv” (Sandel 1945a, 14) [Aunt Kamma wasn’t afraid of horses. On the contrary, they were her life]. Significantly for the child in *Dyr jeg har kjent*, Tante Kamma models an adulthood that is not severed from the animal.

Towards the end of the chapter, the autobiographical child in Sandel’s text is exiting childhood and becoming an adolescent, which corresponds with her family’s move north to Tromsø. “Jeg var kommet i en alder da jeg ikke lenger tenkte

⁴⁵ See the introduction to Liggins (2014).

utelukkende på hesten” (32) [I had arrived at an age at which I no longer thought exclusively about horses]. The child’s shift away from the horse is caused in part by a rocky relationship with “den siste hesten” (33) [the last horse] in the narrator’s life, Osman. Unlike the euphoric horse ride described above, in which the child feels at one with the animal, the child and Osman are never quite in sync. “Jeg tror [Osman] så ned på mig” (33) [I think Osman looked down on me], says the narrator, “dyrene har samme evne til å sette en på plass som barn har” (33) [animals have the same ability to put one in one’s place as children have]. Again, the narrator aligns the perspective and wisdom of the animal with that of the child. But the autobiographical child at this point in the text is no longer really a child: she is outgrowing her affiliation with the animal; the horse, Osman, sees her as separate, as other. Perhaps she will not grow up to be like Tante Kamma after all. As the narrator states, “sjelden gir tilværelsen oss det vi drømte om” (35) [rarely does life give us what we’ve dreamed of].

From the developmental perspective that I have elaborated in this dissertation, the child in the first chapter of *Dyr jeg har kjent* appears to demonstrate normative growth: she undergoes a phase of obsession and intimacy with animals—namely, a number of horses—and she emerges from that phase as something more adult, more human, and—critically—more conventionally female. In the following chapter, I consider the case of girls and women who do not outgrow or reject the horse obsession, which I read as a decidedly queer position. Though the child within Sandel’s narrative may not be considered queer with respect to her overall development, her various encounters with horses contain elements that trouble the developmental paradigm. When the child cuts her toy horse’s tail, she exposes adults’ lies about growth. Her premise is faulty, but it is a stark moment nonetheless: even toys, which should be able to “live” forever, can be marked by time and death. Death is also evoked in the scene at the armory, where the child both flirts with the uncanny and confronts the prospect of her literal death. The dream of remaining with the animal—of staying a child, or of becoming Tante Kamma—is a dream outside of time, or at least a dream outside of normative reproductive time. The most poignant death in “De første dyrene” is the death of childhood. As she does elsewhere in her authorship, Cora Sandel, in *Dyr jeg har kjent*, aligns herself with the child, who faces death in its various forms. As Janneken Øverland rightly puts it, “Cora Sandel forsvarer barns være- og tenkemåte. En kunne si det så drastisk at hun er på barns side mot de voksne, også der hvor det egentlig er umulig, der hvor det som barnet kjemper mot er tiden selv” (1983, 32) [Cora Sandel defends the child’s way of being and way of thinking. One could put it so drastically as to say that she is on the side of children against adults, even when it is quite impossible, when what the child is fighting against is time itself]. In Sandel’s text, the animal is the child’s ally against the forward march of time.

Conclusion: The Autobiographical Child as Sideways Growth

In this chapter I have examined three versions of autobiographies of childhood in which the animal plays a prominent role. As I have shown, these texts suggest that

the animal is not only critical for the child's process of "growing up" but also for the adult author's project of "looking back." In Sigurd Hoel's text, the child's failure to get "close enough" to certain animals (a pet cat, a baby goat) and his keen interest in less cuddly ones (snakes and insects) help to illuminate the child's radical alterity, both as a psychological subject and as an artist/outsider in a conservative community. In Tarjei Vesaas's authorship, the figure of the horse is reworked at various moments throughout the author's life. As I argued, the horse mediates gestures not just forwards and backwards (through time and memory) but also inwards, outwards, and to the side, suggesting that the construction of the remembered child and "development" are not strictly linear or even cyclical affairs, but sideways ones. Finally, with Cora Sandel's text, I argued that the animal helps the child and the remembering adult to expose the trouble in "straight" female development. In each of these examples of twentieth century Scandinavian autobiographies of childhood, we can observe the author working through the animal, both to grow—sometimes upwards, sometimes sideways—as well as to remember. Ultimately, my analysis in this chapter suggests that the metaphor of the "inner" or "lost" child is insufficient in thinking about these—and likely other—autobiographies. The autobiographical child in Hoel, Vesaas, and Sandel is not wholly or exclusively a past child or an interior child—"distanced, diminutive, and clearly framed," as Susan Stewart suggests of the "miniature" child within (1993, 44). Rather, in (re)constructing the remembered child, these authors require the external figure of the animal, which disrupts the notion of a contiguous and independent internal self. In these texts, the autobiographical child is queer in its excess. It is excessive in its improper and persistent alliance with the animal, and it is excessive in its insistence upon itself, as a childhood that violates the model of linear or contained growth: it is a child in the form of a sideways literary construct.

CHAPTER THREE
Children and Animals Beyond Encounter:
Queer Species, Animal Drag, Horse Cyborgs

Introduction: Posthumanism and the Child-Animal Figuration

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I drew on the concept of queerness, especially as figured by Stockton and Haraway, to offer new readings of texts from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Specifically, I argued that Lille Alvide and Nils Holgersson can be understood as queer child figures for how they defy normative development, including with respect to sexuality and species. In the second chapter, I adapted Stockton's concepts of the queer child and sideways growth to examine problems of "development" in context of autobiography. There I argued that the author works through the animal to construct the remembered child as an excessive and sideways literary expression. While human-animal "encounter" is generally a useful category for my analysis in Chapters One and Two—Alvide and Nils encounter a bear and geese; Hoel, Sandel, and Vesaas encounter animals through memory, and memories through the animal—the examples in this chapter go beyond encounter, as defined by Tom Tyler: "an encounter is a meeting between discrete parties, which ceases at the moment they combine or separate" (2009, 3). In this chapter I examine three Nordic examples of the child-animal figuration beyond encounter: Tove Jansson's Moomin series (1945–1970), Jon Fosse's *Dyrehagen Hardanger* (1993; *The Hardanger Zoo*), and Selman Vilhunen's documentary film *Hobbyhorse Revolution* (2017).

I have previously suggested that the examples in this chapter engage more explicitly with concepts of queerness than my previous examples do. This can be partly explained by the fact that they are products of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: these texts emerged over the course of a period in which queerness—both as a way to describe identity or being and as a body of critical and theoretical work—gained increasing cultural circulation and currency. Additionally, and relatedly, these texts engage more directly than my previous examples do with questions of sexuality and gender. I first argue that despite the mostly humanist readings of Jansson's Moomin books, the series is invested in questions of nonhuman speciation and in what I call queer species. I then draw on work at the intersection of queer theory and animal studies to suggest that Fosse's *Dyrehagen Hardanger* is about children in animal drag. I finally use Donna Haraway's concept of the cyborg and Jane Bennett's theory of "vibrant matter" to argue that the Finnish hobbyhorse girls of Vilhunen's film are decidedly queer figures. The latter two examples contain child-animal figurations: children pretending to be animals in Fosse's text, girls riding hobbyhorses in Vilhunen's documentary. In Jansson's Moomin series, the child-animal figuration can be located both in the animal-like child characters in Jansson's series (such as Moomintroll) as well as in the encounter between the Moomin characters and the child reader of Jansson's texts.

As this summary of my arguments suggests, this chapter relies on posthumanist thought. I want to briefly discuss how posthumanism intersects with my treatment of the child-animal figuration. Broadly speaking, posthumanist

scholarship has exposed a weak and damaging premise that undergirds humanist thinking—namely, that humans are separate from and superior to nonhuman others. Posthumanism aims to refigure the human as not separate from, but enmeshed in, ecological and technological systems. Importantly, this work has taken up both animals and “things” as instances of the nonhuman. For example, while Cary Wolfe rightly emphasizes the subjectivity and rights of nonhuman beings such as animals (2012), Katherine Hayles’s important work demonstrates how humans’ mediation of information and technology is not abstract but embodied (2009). Queer studies has offered a critical intervention in this scholarship by pointing to how deconstructing a human-nonhuman binary does not go far enough in challenging humanism’s premises, since humanism has never been (equally) interested in all humans. Indeed, versions of “humanist” thought have enabled and helped to justify the (ongoing) dismissal, repression, violence towards, and killing of various people, including women, people of color, the poor, queer people, and people with disabilities, among others. Scholars of childhood studies have pointed out that *children* are often missing from lists of marginalized others. I find this to be an important claim on two counts: first, in that children are indeed culturally and legally marginalized figures in this world, and second, in that children often remain invisible as such, even in progressive humanist (or posthumanist) conversations that challenge patriarchal norms about who gets to be a subject.

Recent scholarship begins to correct for the exclusion of the child in posthumanist discourse. I have already drawn on the work of Kate Stewart and Matthew Cole (2014), who understand children and animals as similarly oppressed subjects and argue for vegan practices as a mode of protecting and empowering both. In *Children’s Literature and the Posthuman* (2014), Zoe Jaques argues that children’s fiction “can offer sophisticated interventions into debates about what it means to be human or non-human and offer ethical imaginings of a ‘posthuman’ world” (2014, 5). Similar to Stewart and Cole, Jaques sees children and animals as productive allies in a posthumanist realm. While I share these scholars’ interest in the liberatory potential of shared child-animal spaces, I am most interested in the pleasures and discomforts that arise from child-animal figurations in which the slippage between species is plausible, palpable, real. In this respect, work at the intersection of queer studies and posthumanism is most informative for the arguments in this chapter. One important contribution of this work is resisting efforts to “reclaim” queerness and queer people for humanism and the humanities. As Dana Luciano and Mel Chen put it in the title of their introduction to *Queer Inhumanisms: “Has the Queer Ever Been Human?”* (2015). I would pose the same question about the child. Following Luciano and Chen, I am less interested in restoring or endowing the full humanity of the child, which easily becomes a patronizing project, than I am in exploring the potential for new subjectivities that the not-quite-human child presents.⁴⁶ For me, the prospect that the child is not-

⁴⁶ Zoe Jaques and Kenneth Kidd share my suspicion of recuperating children and childhood for the humanities. Jaques writes: “For Gubar, insistence on the ‘radical alterity or otherness of children is both ‘dehumanizing and demeaning;’ in this book I argue that one does not necessarily lead to the other” (2015, 9). Kidd argues, “the contemporary and very welcome focus on children’s agency in

quite-human or even a “separate species” (Gubar 2016), is both plausible and not inherently problematic. Rather, I view this child as critically productive, not only for the challenges it poses to humanist regimes, but also for the rich aesthetic and philosophical tensions it presents.

Queer Species and Posthumanist Subjectivities in Tove Jansson’s Moomin Series

Aside from Astrid Lindgren’s Pippi Longstocking, few children’s book characters are as beloved in Scandinavia—and around the world—as Tove Jansson’s Moomin characters. The Moomins are featured in a range of works written and illustrated by Jansson. These include a series of eight novels (1945–1970), five picturebooks, and a long-running Moomin comic strip. The Moomin books revolve around the Moomin family—the loving Moominmamma, the pensive Moominpappa, their son Moomintroll—and the cast of characters that come in and out of their lives, including the orderly Hemulen, the nervous Fillyjonk, and the wanderer Snufkin. Over the course of the novel series, the Moomins face natural disasters, encounter a hobgoblin, produce a play, and travel by sea. Though critics agree the series becomes increasingly introspective and “adult” as it progresses, the Moomin books are widely considered children’s literature. The Moomin series’ broad and lasting appeal can be attributed to Jansson’s brilliant integration of gentle humor and philosophical heft, and of word and image. Corinne Buckland says, “[Jansson] writes with an exquisite lightness of touch, yet at the same time probes the deep truths of human existence” (2007, 28). In this section I will argue that Jansson’s Moomin series also “probes the deep truths” of a more-than-human existence.

Since Jansson’s death in 2001 (b. 1914), there has been an uptick in Jansson scholarship. Much of this scholarship, including two popular biographies (Westin 2014, Karjalainen 2014) and the anthology *Tove Jansson Rediscovered* (McLoughlin and Lidström Brock 2007), has shed light on the range of Jansson’s artistic output and on the intersections of Jansson’s art and her personal life. An accomplished painter, Jansson once said, “every canvas is a self portrait” (Westin 2014, 472). This statement also pertains to the Moomin series, in which various characters are understood as stand-ins for Jansson and her loved ones. Raised by artists in a Finnish-Swedish family in Helsinki, Jansson’s life revolved around two things, as Tuula Karjalainen claims: work and love (2014). Work, however, often came first. Jansson was remarkably prolific. Beyond her painting and the Moomin oeuvre, she wrote several well-received books for adults, composed poetry, drew political cartoons, and even made films. She was often heavily involved in the publication and marketing of her books and was obsessive about keeping up with written correspondence. Jansson was immensely popular during her lifetime, and the fame took a toll. Much of her art revolves around what Jansson scholar W. Glyn Jones calls “the artist’s problem” or “the need for the right conditions in which to create” (1983,

both childhood studies and children’s literature studies runs [the] risk” of following a tradition of “uncritical humanism under and through which nonhuman animals will continue to suffer” (2017, xx).

39). For Jansson, those conditions included solitude, something she found spending summers on the island of Klovharu with her female partner, Tuulikki Pietilä. Jansson was an out lesbian for most of her adult life.

Almost all reception of Jansson's Moomin series emphasizes its humanist themes. Moominmamma's homemaking, Moominpappa's memoir writing, and Moomintroll's development are central motifs. So too are Snufkin's creative process, Toffle's loneliness, and various characters' neuroses. The books mostly take place in the peaceful Moominvalley, though the peace is intermittently disrupted by forces both external (floods, comets, visitors) and internal (identity crises, creative frustration, ennui). Agneta Rehal-Johansson reads the Moomin series as a "family romance" that ultimately investigates its own tropes (2006); Jukka Laajarinne offers an existentialist take, suggesting Jansson's series helps readers explore questions such as "Vem är jag? Vilken är min plats i världen och bland andra människor?" (2011, 9) [Who am I? What is my place in the world and among other people?]; early reviewers of the Moomin books were quick to critique Jansson's apparent embrace of bourgeois life and lack of engagement with leftist politics. Each of these interpretations, and many others, rely on an anthropomorphic reading of the Moomin characters: the Sniffs, Snufkins, and Snorkmaidens of the world are understood, fundamentally, as symbols for human beings.

Yet, the Moomins' animality is hard to ignore: Moomintroll resembles a hippo, the Fillyjonk has a face like a fox, many characters have whiskers and/or tails, and even those who look most like humans are described as having "tassar" ["paws"] like all the rest. In scholarship and elsewhere, acknowledgment of the Moomins' animality or nonhumanity is usually peripheral: characters are described as "hippo-like" (VisitFinland.com, n.d.), "kangaroo-like" (Laity 2007, 170), and as "strangely hybrid fantastic creatures" (Jaques 2015, 160), typically without further comment. Shallow interpretations of the Moomins' animality encourage anthropomorphic and anthropocentric readings of Jansson's series while denying the complex reading of species that the series actually invites. Below I make three arguments. The first is that Jansson's Moomin series explodes the categories typically used to describe animals in children's literature. The second, related argument is that the Moomin series is populated with what I call queer species and that the series itself has queer parentage. Finally, I examine the Hattifatteners as a rich demonstration of the cybernetic principle and as an example of the Moomin series' investment in posthumanist subjectivities.

Hybrid, Monster, Troll: Defying the Bounds of Species in Children's Literature

Part of what makes the Moomin series a fascinating object of study is that it defies the categories generally used to classify animals in children's literature. Arbuthnot and Sutherland assign animal stories to three categories: "those in which animals behave like human beings, those in which they behave like animals save for the fact that they can talk, and those in which they behave like animals" (1972, 381). Or, as Deirdre Dwen Pitts cleverly sums it up: "Ourselves in Fur," "Animals as Animals but Talking," and "Animals as Animals" (1974, 171). Seemingly obvious examples of these categories might be Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* (1902), E.B. White's

Charlotte's Web (1952), and Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877), respectively. Even with canonical examples, however, these categories run into trouble. Peter Rabbit may resemble a mischievous child, but, as Lawrence Buell points out, he is sometimes clothed like a human boy and is other times stripped down, as if threatening a return to "the bestial state" (2014, 410). In *Charlotte's Web*, animals can talk, but the spider has the additional ability to write, drawing attention to the complex relationship between animals and language. *Black Beauty* features an "animal as animal"—but an animal-as-animal who narrates in the first person. Clearly, these categories are restrictive and, as Pitts says, "arbitrary" (1972, 171). Still, many children's literature scholars have embraced this kind of schema.⁴⁷ (I cannot help but see in these rubrics an attempt to tame the wilderness of children's texts.)

One of the glaring gaps in Arbuthnot and Sutherland's model is the lack of a category for fantastical creatures and made-up animals, which are found in abundance in children's literature. For example, *Alice in Wonderland* features the uncannily grinning Cheshire Cat and the Mock Turtle (whose very name makes fun of species categories); Dr. Seuss's creatures evoke the animal in their furry exteriors, yet *The Cat in the Hat* ([1957] 2018) defies his species name in size, speech, and dress; and the beasts of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1974) have bodies composed of bull horns, bird legs, and human feet. A question evoked by these examples of nonstandard animals in children's texts is whether terms other than *animal* are best in assessing the Moomins—for example, monster, hybrid, or troll. Though the term "troll" is true to the Swedish original (*Mumintröll*) and the series makes reference to trolls throughout, the Moomin characters do not resemble the trolls of Scandinavian folklore. As John Lindow writes, "if the Moomins really are trolls, they are surely the strangest looking trolls ever" (2014, 128). Lindow points out that it is only the protagonist, Moomintröll, whose name contains the "troll" designation, while *Mumin* (Moomin) has no particular meaning (2014, 128). Though Moomins, like monsters, defy boundaries both physical and social, the Moomin characters generally do not evoke fright, as monsters typically do.⁴⁸ As for the term hybrid, one might ask regarding the Moomins: hybrids of *what*? Unlike the beasts of *Where the Wild Things Are*, it is hard to say just which bodies or parts a Hemulen or a Fillyjonk brings together.

The term I argue is best suited to the various characters in the Moomin series is queer species. I used this term in the first chapter to describe Nils Holgersson in his shrunken, elfin state. There I argued that the elf-boy Nils could be understood as a queer species for how his nonhuman state is explicitly connected to the impossibility of being socialized as a boy and of finding a girl to marry, thus barring him from participation in heteronormative culture and heterosexual reproduction. With Jansson's series I will make a similar argument, suggesting that the Moomins

⁴⁷ Johnson (2000) follows this model. Lande outlines similar categories, though she has a category for toys: "dyr som dyr" [animals as animals], "dyr som mennesker" [animals as people], "lekedyr" [toy animals] (n.d.). *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* identifies four "purposes" of animal stories that roughly align with Arbuthnot and Sutherland's divisions (Hahn 2015).

⁴⁸ See the introduction to Eriksson (2016) for an overview of the figure of the monster in historical context.

are queer species not just for their strangeness but for how that strangeness is bound up with questions of species and (re)production.

Queer Species in Moominland

In making my argument about species in the Moomin series it is important to acknowledge a related argument that has already been made—namely, that the series is invested in its own origins and mythology. In her biography of Tove Jansson, Boel Westin carefully traces this theme across time, genres (Moomin comics, operas, TV-plays, etc.), and editions (Jansson reworked multiple books in the core series). As Westin’s analysis makes clear, Jansson investigates Moomin origins even as she represents them, from the conception of Moomintroll in her youth to the final Moomin novel, in which the Moomin family is absent from Moominvalley and may never return. For Westin, the Moomin series’ preoccupation with origins and identity is bound up with Jansson’s own processes of artistic self-assertion and self-reinvention. Though I find her argument convincing, Westin’s impressive scholarship on Jansson—and Jansson scholarship in general—has often overlooked the Moomin series’ profound curiosity about species that accompanies its interest in mythology.

My analysis will focus on the series of eight Moomin books published between 1945–1970, as well as *Det osynliga barnet och andra berättelser* ([1962] 2017; *Tales from Moominvalley* [2010h]), a collection of short stories that is related to the series. It is worth giving an overview of the series here. The first Moomin book, *Småtrollen och den stora översvämningen* ([1945] 2018, *The Moomins and The Great Flood* [2018]), introduces the Moomin family and is considered a kind of Moomin “creation story.” The second text, *Kometjakten* (1946; *Comet in Moominland*),⁴⁹ presents important characters such as Snufkin (*Snusmumriken*) and Snorkmaiden (*Snorkfröken*) and is widely understood as an allegory for wartime. These first two texts establish the mood of Jansson’s series, which fluctuates between humor and comfort on the one hand and fear of apocalypse on the other. The next three books in the series—*Trollkarlens hatt* ([1948] 2016; *Finn Family Moomintroll* [2010b]), *Muminpappans bravader* (1950; *The Exploits of Moominpappa*)⁵⁰, and *Farlig midsommar* ([1954] 2017; *Moominsummer Madness* [2010f])—flesh out the fictional world through an array of Moomin adventures. The series’ final three novels—*Trollvinter* ([1957] 2017; *Moominland Midwinter* [2010c]), *Pappan och havet* ([1965] 2018; *Moominpappa at Sea* [2010d]), and *Sent i November* ([1970] 2018; *Moominvalley in November* [2010g])—are darker in tone than the previous texts, as the characters grapple with questions of identity and purpose, and as the series reflects on its own themes.

Unlike many series (books, TV, etc.) that depict a progression of plot and characters across time, the Moomin series mostly lacks “development” from one text

⁴⁹ *Kometjakten* was reworked by Jansson and released as *Kometen kommer* (1968; *Comet in Moominland* [2010a]), which is the version found in the works cited.

⁵⁰ *Muminpappans bravader* was reworked by Jansson and released as *Muminpappans memoarer* (1968; *Moominpappa’s Memoirs* [2010e]), which is the version I reference.

to the next, with the exception of Moomintroll's general growing-up process. As my arguments throughout this section suggest, the Moomin texts are more invested in *filling in* or *spreading out* the narrative world than in moving it forward. This theme resonates with Stockton's concept of sideways growth, which I employ here to observe the development not of a child, but of a book series for children. Below I examine three "sideways" aspects of Jansson's texts: the elaboration of queer species across the Moomin series; the "evolution" of Moomintroll, in and outside of the Moomin texts; and finally, the question of queer parentage—including of the series itself. In the conclusion of this section, I consider the idea of a Moomin extinction, which I read as a fitting end to the series' ongoing engagement with problems of speciation, genealogy, and death.

Though the fact has been mostly overlooked in Jansson scholarship, the Moomin series is obsessed with questions of species and speciation. For example, throughout the series characters pose questions such as, "vad är ni för ena" ([1945] 2018, 13) ["what sort of thing are you" (2018, 15)]? and, "hur skulle det bli här i livet om en misa plötsligt handlade som en mymla eller en homsa som en hemul?" ([1954] 2017, 39) ["what would life be like if a Misabel suddenly behaved like a Mymble, or a Whomper like a Hemulen" (2010f, 36)]? The texts also contain species-based adjectives to describe certain traits and behaviors, such as when Moominpappa states, "dragningen till havet måste vara en muminstisk egenskap" ([1968] 2017, 72) ["an attraction for the sea must be a Moominous quality" (2010e 61)] or when the Hemulen's atypical behavior is described as "ohemult" ([1948] 2016, 94) ["un-Hemulenish" (2010b, 91)]. Especially in the earlier Moomin books, Jansson's narrator often describes a character's species in parentheses or footnotes as a way to fill in "facts" about a Snork's coloring ([1948] 2016, 38) or a Hemulen's habit of dress ([1948] 2016, 27). The series even has its own Linnaean figure in the Hemulen: obsessed with collecting and cataloguing, the Hemulen often makes reference to natural phenomena according to (an invented) binomial nomenclature, such as when he declares the comet a relative of "Filicnarcus Snufsigalonica" ([1968] 2016, 50). As this evidence suggests, the Moomin series is curious about its internal taxonomies and genealogies. Yet, it is difficult—if not impossible—to pin down a given character's or species' lineage, even when reading across the series. In other words, Jansson's series is not invested in confidently sorting species, as Linnaeus is, nor in mapping speciation and genealogy onto a broader Moomin mythology, as is often the case with serial works (*Game of Thrones* (2011–2019) is a fine example). Rather, I argue, Jansson's series is interested in playfully deconstructing the categories of "species" and "subject."

An elegant illustration of this deconstruction can be found in the way Jansson troubles the distinction between individual and species. Specifically, *the Fillyjonk*—a character with a proper name—is *a Fillyjonk*—a species group with multiple individuals. (This is also true of the Hemulen and some other characters/species in the series.) *The Fillyjonk*—a character featured, for example, in the short story "Filifjonkan som trodde på katastrofer" ("The Fillyjonk Who Believed in Disasters")⁵¹ and in the final Moomin novel—is a tall, foxlike lady who is prone to

⁵¹ See Jansson ([1962] 2017, 43-67) and Jansson (2010h, 34-58).

anxiety and obsessed with cleaning. That *the* Fillyjonk is *a* Fillyjonk is made clear, for example, when she reflects, “det är inte alltid så lätt att vara en filifjonka” (Jansson [1954] 2017, 83) [“it isn’t always easy being a Fillyjonk” (2010f, 85)], or when, in the introduction to his memoirs, Moominpappa explains that out of respect for others’ privacy, he has occasionally switched out Fillyjonks for Hemulens, but that the sophisticated reader will be able to tell the difference. This last example might be read as a wink from the author, acknowledging that fans of her series may indeed be well enough versed in the Moomin world to distinguish one fictional species from another. It also implies some questions: When and how does it work to swap out one species for another, in storytelling and in life? What does it mean for an individual to stand in for the group, and vice-versa? Moominpappa seems rather cavalier on these questions. As for Jansson, I argue the author embraces what Donna Haraway calls, “the oxymoron inherent in “species”—always both logical type and relentlessly particular” (2008, 164). While humanist logic insists on the importance of the individual subject, Jansson’s series suggests it is neither necessarily possible nor inherently desirable to distinguish individual from type. *One and kind, individual and species*: Jansson’s series shows that a figure might be both at once, or may fluctuate between the two. The Moomin series evokes pleasure in this uncertainty, while also pointing to a position that is not easily accommodated by linear rubrics of speciation and descent.

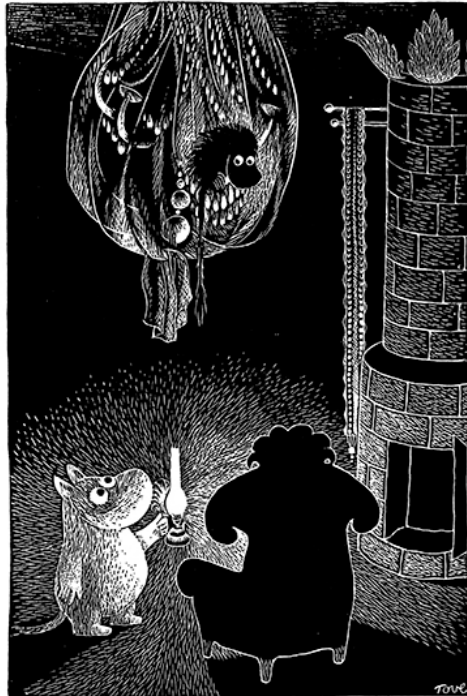
The figure of Moomintroll offers another case for investigating questions of genealogy and descent in the series. Westin gives a thorough account of how Moomintroll came to be, which I will summarize here. The idea of the Moomintroll came to Jansson by way of her uncle, who jokingly warned the young Tove the “Moomintrolls” might catch her if she snuck food from the larder (Westin 2014, 162-166). Jansson’s early sketches of Moomintrolls include a ghost-like creature who blows on people’s necks (Westin 2014, 163), a large-nosed “Snork” etched on the wall of the bathroom at the family summer house (161), and black Moomintrolls, whose color Westin suggests was a sign of the “dark currents” that would come to undergird the Moomin series (165-6). While the Moomins of the first two books are somewhat gangly, they become fatter (and cuter) by the third book. As Westin says, Moomintroll “grew in circumference as he became more famous” (284). This visual evolution of the character is perhaps best understood in commercial terms: as Moomintroll becomes more popular, his form becomes consistent, and his species becomes recognizable to the public. Indeed, the Moomintroll species proliferates across countless marketed objects, from teacups to couture (Johnson, I. 2018).

Moomintroll’s transformation from notebook sketch to capitalist commodity is only part of his species story. The other part unfolds within the Moomin texts and revolves around the figure of the ancestor (*Förfadern*). The ancestor is the ancient forefather of the Moomin species and is introduced in the sixth book, *Moominland Midwinter*. He is an elusive figure who feeds on pine needles and lives in the Moomin family’s “kakelugn” (porcelain heating stove). This fact is an echo of Moominmamma’s explanation, in *The Moomins and The Great Flood*, that earlier generations of Moomintrolls lived behind heating stoves in human homes. Though the ancestor bears a resemblance to modern Moomins, he is smaller and furrier, has a larger snout, and does not speak; in short, he is more animal-like. The ancestor’s

relative animality might be read as suggesting an evolutionary distance between himself and modern Moomins. Relatedly, Mamma's account of Moomin history may suggest that Moomins have become more like humans with time. Critically, though, Moominmamma explicitly distinguishes Moomins from human beings, troubling the common anthropocentric treatment of the Moomin characters: in a world where both Moomins and humans exist, it is difficult to claim that the former are stand-ins for the latter. Moreover, as I will argue, the encounter between Moomintroll and his ancestor destabilizes standard concepts of evolution and descent.

In *Moominland Midwinter*, Moomintroll awakes from hibernation while his parents remain asleep. He digs a tunnel through the snow to the outdoors and has a range of adventures on his own. In humanist terms, this is a novel about development: Moomintroll is growing up, becoming an individual. Moomintroll's encounter with the ancestor in the family living room is arguably the novel's most significant event. This encounter is represented in a striking illustration in which Moomintroll's gaze meets the ancestor's in an uncanny moment of mutual recognition (Figure 5). In the illustration, the ancestor sits in the chandelier, looking downward at Moomintroll, whose lantern splashes light on the scene. The illustration is done in a style in which white lines are etched away from a dominant black background, emphasizing an atmosphere of mystery and shadows. Westin suggests the ancestor mirrors what is "dark, hidden, and strange" within the maturing Moomintroll (2014, 314). She also rightly claims, "it is all fundamentally genealogical" (314).

Figure 5
Moomintroll and his ancestor (Jansson [1957] 2017, 69)



I want to elaborate on the “genealogical” aspects of this encounter. Just what kind of genealogy does the ancestor illuminate? In *Moominland Midwinter*, various characters speculate that the ancestor is one thousand years old, while characters in the final Moomin novel, in which the ancestor is discussed but never seen, suspect he might be three hundred years old. The series offers no explanation of how the ancestor has survived for so long, nor is there any account of how he arrived at the Moomin house. Indeed, as Westin says, the ancestor seems to transcend “time and space” (2014, 315). To invoke Elizabeth Freeman’s notion of queer time discussed in this dissertation’s first chapter, the ancestor defies “chrononormativity,” or “the interlocking temporal schemes necessary for genealogies of descent” (2010, xxii). Indeed, the series never clarifies the genealogical history connecting the ancestor to Moomintroll. Rather, the Moomin-ancestor encounter is a product of “anachronism,” “compression,” and “ellipsis”—terms Freeman uses to describe non-chrononormative time (xxii). An ancestor should not be able to stand (or dangle) in the same room as his distant descendent, yet that is exactly what we find here. Jansson represents a spatial genealogical arrangement that defies temporal logic.

A spatial model of genealogy is also evoked in the Moomin series’ fourth book, *Moominpappa’s Memoirs*, which fills in details about Pappa’s past. Though the novel reveals little about Pappa’s genealogy—in fact, he was an orphan—the text is more specific about the genealogies of two other characters, Sniff and Snufkin. These are represented in two family trees, illustrated by Jansson, and they are fine demonstrations of queer genealogies in that they do not account for strict or continuous reproductive lineages. The family trees, which can be viewed on the official Moomin website, show adoption, family members lost and (sometimes) found, and interspecies reproduction. For example, Snufkin’s mother, Mymble (a symbol of fertility in the series), reproduced with the Joxter to create Snufkin, though she also appears to have borne offspring without a partner, including “34 wild grown children,” who are illustrated as seedlings (Moomin.com, n.d. “Snufkin’s Family Tree”). Another form of “wild grown children” is to be found in the ghost-like Hattifatteners, who are sprouted from seeds sown on Midsummer’s Eve (Jansson [1954] 2017, 77). Though all family trees have a spatial aspect as they branch out to show the growth of the family through reproduction (albeit from an arbitrary starting point), Sniff’s and Snufkin’s family trees might be described as extra-spatial in that they contain Jansson’s commentary and explanations, which are boxed off yet linked to the tree proper. Family trees in *Moominland*, it would seem, require caveats. Importantly, Sniff’s family tree hints at the idea of chosen family: Hodgkins is the Muddler’s biological uncle, but also his adoptive father (Moomin.com, n.d. “Sniff’s Family Tree”). This example is part of a larger trend identified by Mia Österlund in her investigation of “queera underströmmar” [queer undercurrents] in the Moomin books. Though often read as an archetype of the heteronormative family (Mamma, Pappa, child), the Moomin family is, in fact, always in flux as it welcomes a range of visitors into its home. Moomins—the term is commonly used to refer not just to the Moomintrolls but to the series’ characters more broadly—make up a highly mutable “familjekonstellation” [family constellation] (Österlund 2106, 126) that encourages queer kinship.

One other aspect of these illustrated family trees is worth examining: they were never published in the Moomin books. Though the family trees are now available on the official Moomin website, they formerly existed only in the pages of Jansson's notebooks, where, as Westin suggests, the author used them for her own reference (1988, 110). Jansson did something similar in illustrating a map for her personal use while writing *Moominpappa at Sea* (Sundmark 2014, 176). This personal map was more detailed than the map that was published in the book for readers. (Most of the Moomin books contain a map illustrated by Jansson.) As Björn Sundmark argues, these maps are not only a useful reference for readers, they also serve a powerful symbolic function: they “[compress] time and events” and “[encapsulate] the essence of the narrative” (2014, 168). The family trees similarly condense time and space in visual form. The unpublished map for *Moominpappa at Sea* is an example of how Jansson was meticulous in constructing the Moomin universe and, per Westin, its mythology. The unpublished family trees of Sniff and Snufkin suggest Jansson's meticulousness and self-reflexivity extended to questions of species and genealogy. Jansson has often been compared to her characters Snufkin (the artist) and Toft (the loner). Perhaps she is also like the Hemulen, the taxonomist of an unwieldy set of species in her own series.

As my discussion thus far suggests, the Moomin series' interest in origins and species is simultaneously sincere and ironic. Jansson's sense of humor helps to make the deconstructionist point that “true origins” do not really exist, while at the same time her series shows a persistent interest in pursuing, understanding, and constructing them. This tension between the desire to discover origins on the one hand, and rejecting the premise of true origins on the other, can be understood as part of a queer tradition in which patrilineal order and inheritance are challenged or rejected while chosen and non-biological families, including nontraditionally produced children, are honored. Jansson was frequently referred to as the “Moominmamma”—that is, as the matriarch of all things Moomin—and though she often resented the title, she made an illustration that is suggestive of that role. In the illustration, the author sits with her various Moomin characters in her lap and gathered around her (Westin 2014, 286). These are queer offspring indeed: creative children rather than biological ones (Jansson never had children of her own) and a hodgepodge of species. I have mentioned that Jansson was a lesbian, and her Moomin oeuvre extolls queerness in various ways. Jansson coded her love for a woman in her twinned characters, Thingumy and Bob (Westin 2014, 198); a “mymble,” the name of the Moomin series' most erotic character, was the word Jansson and her friends used for a lover of either sex (Westin 2014, 241); and the Moomin texts feature various examples of characters in drag (Laity 2007). What I want to add to this picture, and in keeping with my argument about queer species, is that the Moomin oeuvre itself has a kind of queer parentage.

Queer parentage of the Moomin oeuvre can be understood in terms of its multiple and collective parents. As mentioned, it was Jansson's uncle who came up with the idea of the Moomintroll, which was then “adopted” (and adapted) by Jansson. Though Jansson is clearly the author and driving force behind the Moomin universe, many of her Moomin-related projects were collaborative. In 1954, Charles Sutton acted as Jansson's agent in getting her Moomin comic strip launched in

Britain and elsewhere abroad. In a letter to Sutton that same year Jansson wrote, “if I’m Moominmamma then you’re Moominpappa;” Sutton liked the idea (Westin 2014, 275). In 1960, Jansson’s brother Lars Jansson took over illustrating the comic strip, though he collaborated with Tove on its overall production: the strip had a new Pappa, or perhaps an uncle. Tove Jansson collaborated with Lars and her friend (and former love interest) Vivica Bandler on a 1969 television special called *Moomintroll*. A magazine article promoting the program pictured Tove and Lars Jansson along with Bandler and the Moomin characters (human actors in Moomin costumes). A line of text near the photograph refers to Tove, Lars, and Bandler as the program’s “tre föräldrar” (Dahlström 1969) [three parents]. Thus, at various points, Moomin production is the “child” of a (often ambivalent) mother, a father, an uncle, and a threesome.

The Hattifatteners as Cybernetic Subjectivity

I now extend my thinking about queer species to the Hattifatteners (*hattifnatar*), which I argue offer an elegant illustration of a cybernetic subjectivity. The Hattifatteners are among the strangest species in Jansson’s Moomin series. They are small, white, ghost-like creatures who travel in groups. They do not speak or hear and their only apparent goal is to pursue the horizon. Hattifatteners are electrically charged and though they are not aggressive, they are hardly considered friendly by the other Moomin characters. The official Moomin website says the Hattifatteners “resemble thin mushrooms” (Moomin.com, n.d. “Hattifatteners”), though their appearance also evokes the erotic: they look phallic or sperm-like; Ebba Witt-Brattström calls them “kondomliknande varelsor” (2003, 120) [condom-like beings].⁵² Though the Hattifatteners are often positioned as an opposing force to the Moomin family—and to the Romantic figure of Moominpappa in particular, as I discuss below—Moomintrolls and Hattifatteners actually have shared origins. As mentioned above, Jansson’s first imaginings of the Moomintroll were as ghostly “neck-blowing trolls” (Westin 2014, 164). Jansson’s drawings of these earliest Moomins resemble her later illustrations of the Hattifatteners. As Westin says, “Moomintroll and the Hattifatteners are as if descended from the same original figure, but divided into two species” (2014, 164). Below I argue that Jansson’s Hattifatteners offer an elegant metaphor of the cyborg—a figure the “humanist” Moominpappa can barely resist.

Despite notions of the cyborg as a dehumanizing force—i.e., a machine that assimilates man—even from its beginnings, the cyborg was imagined as a form of technology that both enhances and is integrated with the human subject. The term *cyborg* was coined by Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline in their 1960 article, “Cyborgs and Space.” As the authors write, “the purpose of the Cyborg [...] is to provide an organizational system in which [...] robot-like problems are taken care of automatically and unconsciously, leaving man free to explore, to create, to think, and to feel” (27). Taking this line of thinking a step further, Katherine Hayles argues the

⁵² Jansson’s British agent, Charles Sutton, wanted to steer clear of sexual themes in the Moomin comic strip’s content and did not approve of the Hattifatteners’ “oblong form” (Westin 2014, 277).

human body itself can be understood as a cyborg (2009). Hayles imagines the human body as “the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born” (2009, 3). Following this logic, everything from reading glasses to machine guns to smart phones can be understood as extensions of a body that has “always been posthuman” (Hayles 2009, 279). In her seminal 1984 essay, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Donna Haraway links the figure of the cyborg to “feminism, socialism, and materialism” (2016a, 5). Haraway’s cyborg is both thoroughly political and thoroughly embodied; it breaks down barriers not just between human and machine, but between human and animal and between reality and fiction. These theorizations of the cyborg, as well as the idea of the cyborg in popular circulation, suggest the figure of the cyborg lends itself to appropriation and frequent re-imagination. My discussion of an invented species in a children’s series extends this tradition of an expansive notion of the cyborg, though I also connect the Hattifatteners to the origins of the concept of cybernetics.

Before discussing the Hattifatteners, I want to point out some other cyborgs in the Moomin series. These figures have not been previously identified as cyborgs, and drawing attention to them as such will help me show that the Hattifatteners are not the exception in an otherwise humanist landscape, but rather that they constitute a particularly striking figuration of posthumanism in a fictional world marked by posthumanist traits—including, not least, the queer species I discussed above. Following the logic of Clynnes and Kline, Haraway, and Hayles, cyborgs in Moominvalley are figures that break down barriers among human, animal, and machine. For example, in *The Moomins and The Great Flood*, a glowing flower, which at first serves as a lantern for Moominmamma and Moomintroll, eventually blooms to reveal a humanoid female with shining blue hair ([1945] 2018, 16). In *Moominpappa’s Memoirs*, a ship is converted into a fish-like submarine, which swims in the depths alongside real fish that have light bulbs attached to their heads ([1968] 2017, 144). In *Comet in Moominland*, Snufkin walks on stilts, extending his limbs to navigate over hot lava ([1968] 2016, 102-5). In a scene that evokes Nils Holgersson’s stork ride, Moomintroll rides on the back of a stork in *The Moomins and The Great Flood*, enhancing his body through another creature’s flight, while the stork wears spectacles to strengthen his vision ([1945] 2018, 49). Additionally, Moomins use their own body parts as technology—for example, employing their tails as paddles ([1945] 2018, 15).

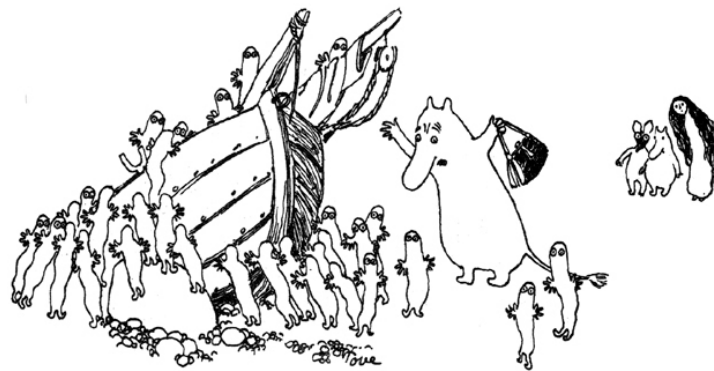
These examples illustrate key traits of the cyborg. One is augmentation of the body, seen here in the use of a flower lantern or in engaging the stork for his powers of flight. These augmented figures can also be understood as collective subjects, or what Katherine Hayles calls an “amalgam”—that is, “a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction” (2009, 3). The Moomin cyborgs also demonstrate a central concept of cybernetics—namely, that of the feedback system (or “control system,” or “feedback loop”). The term *cybernetics* comes from Norbert Wiener’s 1948 text, “Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine” (Wiener 1948). His title indicates the intersections of nature and technology later picked up in writings on the cyborg. A frequently cited example of a

feedback system is that of a blind person and her cane: the human controls the cane, the cane communicates spatial information to the human, and the human adjusts her movements according to that information. The same logic applies to Snufkin on his stilts. Of course, the cybernetic concept also applies to large systems and networks, such as city streets, the internet, and, as the Muddler describes in *Moominpappa's Memoirs*, the telegraph: “det är nånting stort och konstigt. Man skickar iväg små tecken till andra sidan jorden... där blir de ord” ([1968] 2017, 81) [“it’s something big and intricate. It’s where you send small signals to the other side of the earth... where they change into words” (2010e, 69)]!

Tove Jansson’s first Moomin book, which introduces the Hattifatteners, came out in 1945—three years before the publication of Wiener’s essay. That the Hattifatteners have been overlooked in relationship to Wiener’s work is somewhat surprising, as they offer a remarkably cogent illustration of the cybernetic principle. In *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, Mamma describes the Hattifatteners to Moomintroll. She says, “för det mesta är de osynliga [...] (de) vandrar runt världen, stannar ingenstans och bryr sig inte om nånting” ([1945] 2018, 19–20) [“they’re mostly invisible [...] they wander round the world, don’t stay anywhere, and don’t care about anything” (Jansson 2018, 21)]. The first illustration of the Hattifatteners comes several pages later, depicting the ghostlike figures with gaping eyes and mouth-less faces that become mainstays of the Moomin series. The first illustration of the Hattifatteners shows that they travel in groups: this is Hayles’s amalgam, and Haraway’s cyborg—except, here, it is not *two*, but *many*, that make *one*.⁵³ The first illustration of the Hattifatteners shows them getting into a boat (Figure 6). Indeed, the Hattifatteners are seafaring creatures—a fact that has special resonance with the etymology of the term *cybernetics*. The term comes from the Greek word *kybernetike*, which describes steering or navigation. *Kybernetes* is a helmsman, who, like the blind woman with her cane, is engaged in a feedback loop, in which the boat’s rudder and steering wheel mediate information between water and navigator (Lamb and McCormick 2016). *Kybernetike* also describes Hattifatteners as a species and as a collective subjectivity. In *Finn Family Moomintroll*, the Hattifatteners are depicted holding their annual meeting on an island. When outsiders interfere, the Hattifatteners collectively threaten them, ensuring theirs is a closed cybernetic network (Jansson [1948] 2016).

⁵³ This is a variation of Haraway’s “one is too few and two are too many” (2016a, 60).

Figure 6
 Illustration of the Hattifatteners in the first Moomin book ([1945] 2018, 29)



Throughout the series, the Hattifatteners are mocked by various characters for their apparent stupidity and lack of emotions. I argue that Jansson both ironically undercuts and sincerely challenges this attitude, presenting the Hattifatteners as an imaginative alternative to humanist and Romantic ideals. In the first description of the Hattifatteners in *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, Mamma says, “du kan aldrig saga om en hattifnatt är glad eller arg, sorgsen eller förvånad. Jag är säker på att han inte har några känslor alls” ([1945] 2018, 20) [“you can never tell if a Hattifattener is happy or angry, sad or surprised. I am sure they have no feelings at all” (Jansson 2018, 21)]. Yet, in *Finn Family Moomintroll* Snufkin says, “Hatifnattarna kan varken tala eller höra och ser väldigt dåligt. Men deras känslor är fin” ([1948] 2016, 62) [“the Hattifatteners can neither talk nor hear, and they see very badly. But they can feel extremely well” (2010b, 60)]! Is this a contradiction? Not exactly. Moominmamma, representing the humanist ideal, is interested in the individual Hattifattener, as reflected in her speech (“en hattifnatt”). But, per the cybernetic model, the individual Hattifattener does not exist, and Hattifatteners are not concerned with feelings as emotions, as Moominmamma imagines. As a collective, however, Hattifatteners *feel* brilliantly. Their kind of feeling—physical, electric, cybernetic—is not accessible to the individual outsider.

The most important Hattifattener text is “Hatifnattarnas hemlighet” (“The Secret of the Hattifatteners”) in *Det osynliga barnet och andra berättelser* ([1962] 2017; *Tales from Moominvalley* [2010h]). Moominpappa is the Romantic standard-bearer in the Moomin series. He longs for the sublime, figures himself a genius, and tends to follow his creative whims without regard for consequences. (The Moomin series consistently critiques this patriarchal figure, who was based on Jansson’s father, the sculptor Viktor Jansson.) One day, he sees three Hattifatteners at sea from where he stands on the beach. Seeing these “halvt farliga” [“half-dangerous”] others, Pappa is suddenly overcome with the feeling “at han absolut inte ville dricka te på veranden. Den kvällen, eller någon kväll” ([1962] 2017, 136) [“that he didn’t want any tea on the verandah. Not that evening, or any other evening” (2010h, 122)]. It is a feeling he cannot shake, and, when the Hattifatteners come ashore one

day, he climbs aboard their ship and sets out for adventure. On the journey, Pappa is continuously confronted with the Hattifatteners' lack of engagement with his cultural codes and language, creating within the narrative a critical moment in which these may be deconstructed. Pappa wonders if he seems "fånig" ([1962] 2017, 139) ["silly" (2010h, 124)], if the Hattifatteners can "läsa folks tankar" ([1962] 2017, 140) ["read people's thoughts" (2010h, 126)], and whether he will be understood. One day, the Hattifatteners appear with a birch bark scroll. Pappa assumes this is an important document, and becomes deeply curious about its contents. When he unfurls it, however, he finds it blank. After this, there is a shift in Pappa's demeanor:

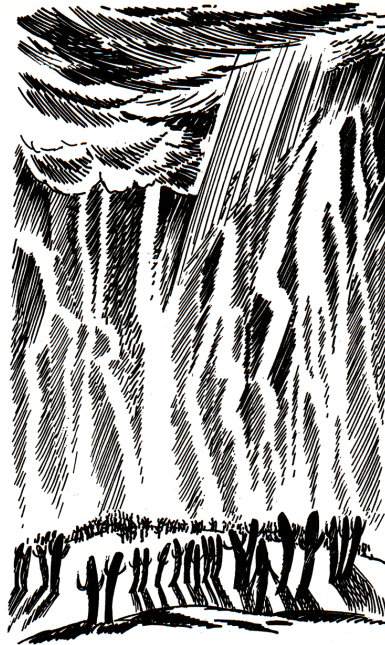
Förresten hade pappan börjat tänka på ett alldeles nytt sätt. Mer och mer sällan funderade han över allt han hade varit med om under sitt vänliga och brokiga liv, och lika sällan drömde han om vad alla de kommande dagarna skulle ge honom. Hans tankar gled som båten, utan minnen och drömmar. ([1962] 2017, 148)

As a matter of fact, Moominpappa had started to think in a wholly new manner. Less and less often he mused about the things he had encountered in his kindly and checkered life, and quite as seldom did he dream about what his future would bring. His thoughts glided along like the boat, without memories or dreams. (2010h, 135)

He stops trying to talk to the Hattifatteners, and even wonders if he is beginning to resemble them. In this state beyond language, Pappa's sense of fusion—with nature, boat, and Hattifatteners—suggests a process of incorporation into the cybernetic subject.

This process comes to a head when Pappa and his companions land at an island where a Hattifattener gathering is taking place. As the crowd grows, Pappa tries to locate "sina egna hattifnatar" ([1962] 2017, 151) ["his own Hattifatteners" (2010h, 137)]—but of course, that logic is irrelevant among the Hattifattener collective. At one point, Pappa feels himself being absorbed by the group. "Han var bare artig och utslätad och följde efter genom det viskande gräset med hatten i tassen" ([1962] 2017, 152) ["His mind was polite and smooth, and he followed the others, hat in hand, through the whispering grass" (2010h, 139)]. Moominpappa ultimately resists total incorporation with the Hattifatteners. Two moments clinch the power of Pappa's old codes. The first occurs when Pappa reads the inscription on his hat: "M.P. av din M.M." ([1962] 2017, 151) ["M.P from your M.M." (2010h, 138)]. Language, and the evocation of the loving heteronormative pair (Moominpappa and Moominamma), makes Pappa long for home. The second happens when Pappa observes the Hattifatteners at their ecstatic gathering. The illustration of this scene shows the cybernetic body from Pappa's perspective, at a distance (Figure 7). The Hattifatteners stand en masse, their faces and small arms raised towards the lightning-filled skies. As the Hattifatteners commune with electricity and with one another, Pappa understands he is an outsider. As Moominpappa sees it, he rejects the Hattifattener life in favor of tea on the verandah. But perhaps it is the cybernetic body that has no use for him.

Figure 7
Hattifatteners at their gathering (Jansson [1962] 2017, 155)



I finally want to connect my posthumanist interpretation of the Hattifatteners to my discussion of queer species above. First, Pappa's attraction to the Hattifatteners has queer overtones. Witt-Brattström reads the Hattifatteners as a kind of "société phallocentrique" (2003, 121) and it is no great leap to think of the Hattifattener gathering as a kind of orgy. Indeed, at one point Moominpappa "fick en oemotståndlig lust att göra likadant. Vagga fram och tillbaka, tjuta och vagga och prassla" ([1962] 2017, 153) ["felt an irresistible desire to do as the Hattifatteners did: to sway back and forth, to sway and howl and rustle" (2010h, 140)]. Jansson's text describes the Hattifatteners as "starkt oppladdade, men hjälplöst instängda" ([1962] 2017, 154) ["heavily charged but hopelessly locked up" (2010h, 142)], hinting at closeting and sexual repression. I do not read Moominpappa as a closeted gay man but agree with Witt-Brattström that the Hattifatteners bring out the "icke domesticerade delen av pappans sexualliv" (2003, 121) [the undomesticated part of Pappa's sexuality]. Relatedly, while I think mapping gayness onto the Hattifatteners offers a shallow interpretation, Jansson's texts clearly mark the Hattifatteners as sexually and existentially other. It is this intersection of the posthumanist and the queer that is evoked in Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," when, for example, she suggests that cyborgs produce "an intimate experience of boundaries" (2016a, 66) and "signal disturbingly and pleurably tight coupling" (2016a, 11). (The "coupling" is multiplied in the case of the Hattifatteners.) The Hattifatteners are a species whose pleasures do not translate into Pappa's language, though they resonate in his body and mind.

Seriality and Extinction: The End of the Moomin Series

In this section I have read against the grain of the mostly humanist readings of Jansson's Moomin series in demonstrating the series' profound interest in speciation, genealogy, and posthumanist subjectivities. Here I want to account for the ending of Jansson's series and connect it to the idea of extinction. In doing so, I will briefly put the Moomin series in context of recent scholarship on serial narratives, which sheds light on my arguments about queer species and cyborgs while also pointing to new questions about Jansson's works.

I have suggested that "progress" in the Moomin series is best understood spatially rather than temporally, as *spreading out* rather than *moving forward*. This trait fits with Frank Kelleter's assessment of popular series generally, ranging from nineteenth century newspaper serials to twenty-first century prestige television (2017). Kelleter argues that unlike "work-bound" narratives, which are self-contained, serial narratives tend towards "narrative sprawl" (2017, 20); they often "[spread]" more than they "[unfold]" (2017, 21) as they are compelled to develop and maintain the continuity of a storyworld across multiple texts or episodes. In this respect, Jansson's Moomin series might be compared to a number of episodic forms, including sitcoms and comic books, in which the emphasis is more on expanding the narrative world than on a broader story arc. Yet, as I hope I have effectively argued, the Moomin series is more spatially oriented than most, invested as it is in fleshing out queer species and sideways genealogies, and disinvested as it is in forward progress. However, when the problem of time does make itself known in the Moomin texts, it is remarkable and certainly evokes mortality. This is true throughout the series, from the frequent threats of apocalypse to the looming presence of the Groke—a shadowy figure who insinuates depression and death.

The prospect of death is most keenly felt in the final novel of the series, which ends with the character Toft waiting at the end of the dock for the Moomin family's return. Boel Westin explicitly connects this ending to the idea of species. She argues that Toft's obsession with "Nummulites," which are a nonfictional species imagined in the final Moomin text to be a primal ancestor of both the Moomins and the Hattifatteners⁵⁴ (perhaps adding a layer of genetic curiosity to Moominpappa's attraction to the latter), symbolizes a return to origins—of the species, and of the series (Westin 2014, 415–418). Understanding Toft as a stand-in for the author, Westin reads the series' end as anticipating a private reunion between the author and her creation (Westin 2014, 418). I, however, am not confident of the Moomin family's return in any form. In context of my species reading of Jansson's series, I interpret the conclusion as signaling extinction. I read Toft's Nummulite obsession—including his reading about the Nummulites in a zoological text—as a kind of elegy for the Moomin family in particular, and for the species of Moominland more broadly. That Jansson finally connects the fictitious species of her series to a real species outside of it, I argue, simultaneously invokes

⁵⁴ The idea of a shared ancestor for Moomins and Hattifatteners is not explicit in the final Moomin novel, but I agree with Witt-Brattström that it is clearly suggested in that the imagined primal ancestor is a sea creature attracted to electric storms (2003, 120).

their life beyond her novels (in the form of countless spin-offs and products) and their death within them.

To pick up on the theme of Moomin life beyond the series proper, I will finally think of the Hattifatteners in context of theories of seriality. Kelleter points out that serial narratives are defined in part by how they keep “certain narrative options” open as they progress (2017, 12), and, because serial narratives remain open-ended, their production and reception “are intertwined in a feedback loop” (2017, 13). I want to suggest that the cybernetic subjectivity of the Hattifatteners can be understood as a figuration of that feedback loop. I will not elaborate on the metaphor in terms of specific reader reception of Jansson’s series, though that is certainly an area for further research, including with respect to fan fiction. Here, though, it is worth noting that the ambivalence felt by many characters in the Moomin series towards the Hattifatteners, and epitomized by Moominpappa in the text I analyzed, is analogous to the ambivalence Jansson felt towards the commercial success of her series. Jansson loved her Moomin characters and made a living off of reproducing them, but her sense of obligation to fans placed great demands on her time (Westin 2014, 495) and she was deeply skeptical of the capitalist systems that threatened her creative control (Westin 2014, 285–89). Though almost certainly unintended, Jansson’s cyborg, in the form of the Hattifatteners, models something profound about the function of her series, within and beyond her own hands.

Dyrehagen Hardanger: Children in Animal Drag

In the previous section I suggested that part of what makes the Moomin series compelling is the way it balances the coziness and humor of everyday life in Moomin Valley with the serious prospects of apocalypse and death. The juxtaposition creates a sense of oddly high stakes in a world where characters are often concerned with forest jaunts and pancakes with jam. The text examined in this section, Jon Fosse’s *Dyrehagen Hardanger* (1993; *The Hardanger Zoo*), shares with the Moomin series this juxtaposition. The text’s publisher (Samlaget) summarizes *Dyrehagen Hardanger* in this way: “Tigeren Knut rømmer frå Dyrehagen Hardanger, og snart gjer bjørnen Per det same. Dyrepassarane Jon og Helge må gjere det dei kan for å få dei inn att i bura” [Tiger Knut escapes from Hardanger Zoo and soon Bear Pear does the same. The zookeepers Jon and Helge must do what they can to get them back in their cages]. On the level of plot, the summary is accurate, but it totally betrays the strangeness and complex stakes of this remarkable children’s text about kids playing zoo. As I argue in this section, Fosse’s text portrays a game that is both more powerful and more fragile than readers might expect.

Though Jon Fosse (b. 1959) has written a number of texts for children, including *Søster* (2000; *Sister*), for which he won the Norwegian Ministry of Culture’s children’s book prize, he is not a typical children’s author. Fosse is an internationally renowned author and playwright, second only to Ibsen in Norwegian dramaturgy. His plays are mostly domestic dramas in which romantic and family bonds are exposed as weak, broken, or absurd. The troubled or troubling child is an

important figure in many of these.⁵⁵ Fosse's singular style is characterized by short, simple sentences and frequent repetition. Especially in dialogue, this style can feel both poetic and stilted, drawing attention to the sounds and rhythms of the Nynorsk in which Fosse writes while commenting on how language often fails people in their attempts to communicate. The author's distinctive language is a critical trait of *Dyrehagen Hardanger*, simultaneously marking the text as Fosse's for those familiar with the author and making it an unusual example of children's prose. Just what makes the text unusual is a major focus of my analysis below.

Though there has been little scholarly attention to Fosse's children's texts, Fosse has been critiqued as an "elitist" children's author who is more concerned with institutional praise than with the tastes of child readers (Mjør 2012, 5). I am skeptical of this kind of critique for its assumption that child readers are not capable of or interested in reading texts that defy popular standards. And in the case of *Dyrehagen Hardanger*, the text's length (54 pages), format (a book with short chapters), vocabulary, and age of the child characters (apparently about 6–12, though the text does not specify) make it entirely accessible to early and middle-grade readers.⁵⁶ I further maintain that children's literature that lacks a (substantial) child audience is worthy of critique. Part of what makes these texts compelling is that they challenge the frequently cited description of children's literature as "the only genre defined by its audience" (Hunt 2011, 43). Part of my argument in this section is that Fosse's text presents interesting challenges to the conventions of the "genre."

Though the plot of *Dyrehagen Hardanger* is simple, the problems are complex as the narrative exposes an array of tensions: between children and adults, between boys and girls, between the human and the animal, and—not least—between real and pretend. Fosse's text suggests that its child characters are at an age when pretend play is desired but decreasingly tenable, and much of the narrative consists of the children's negotiations of the conditions for and stakes of pretend play. As with Jansson's *Moomins*, the "animals" in this text are hard to classify: What kind of creature is a child pretending to be an animal? Is the child only pretending, or, does the pretending make it real? In this section, I use theory on animality, performance, and play to argue that Fosse's text features what I call children in animal drag.

The Visual and Verbal Drag of *Dyrehagen Hardanger*

Fosse's text opens with the sentence, "'Tigeren Knut har rømt,'" sa dyrepassar Helge" (1993, 5) ["Tiger Knut has escaped," said Zookeeper Helge]. With this line, and throughout the text, Fosse evokes a prominent motif in children's literature in which a character's proper name is attached to their role and/or species. Peter Rabbit is an iconic example. Lawrence Buell calls *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Potter, 1902) "a bad-boy story in animal drag" (2014, 410). The notion of animals in

⁵⁵ *Barnet* (*The Child*) is about a couple who hope the arrival of their baby will bring happiness; it does not. In *Mor og barn* (*Mother and Child*), a young man visits his estranged mother, who only alienates him further. See Fosse (1997).

⁵⁶ The publisher specifies readers ages 6–9 (Samlaget n.d.).

children's texts as performing some kind of drag is, I argue, a more useful concept than simply anthropomorphism or "ourselves in fur" (Pitts 1974, 171). The idea of drag evokes the performativity and layered identities that are in fact characteristic of anthropomorphized animals, whose very presence in children's texts creates a "table-turning effect" (Buell 2014, 412) that challenges a human-animal binary. Of course, Fosse's text operates differently than Potter's: the children in *Dyrehagen Hardanger* are not biologically tiger, monkey, or bear, as their names suggest, but human. While we can think of Peter Rabbit as an animal in human drag (by far the more common situation in children's texts), the characters in Fosse's text are children in animal drag. In part because Fosse's text inverts the standard formula, it plays with readers' expectations of the genre (children's literature) while also drawing attention to the slippery relationship between role and self, including when the "role" is that of an animal.

Two theoretical frames are useful in thinking about this slippage in Fosse's text. The first comes from an anthropological and child development perspective. Gene Myers has studied relationships between children and animals, including how children use and represent animals in their pretend play. His research suggests that taking on a "pretend-animal role" allows children to "enact divergent relations to time and space, social roles, and rules of proper conduct" (Myers 2007, 159). This includes a full or partial rejection of human language, which works "so long as other players tolerate the animal's cryptic and unaccountable behavior" (Myers 2007, 159). Myers contends that children's animal play is an important site for discerning humans' closeness to and empathy with animals. This empathy, says Myers, is often understood and expressed in the body. Myers writes, "because the basic medium of representation in pretend is bodily translation, and because it is bodily agency, coherence and affect that we share with other species, animal-role pretend play must encourage a sense of continuity between child and animal identities" (2007, 165). Fosse's text certainly points to such continuity.

For the second theoretical frame in this section, I follow the lead of Nicole Seymour, who defines the concept of "animal drag." Invoking Esther Newton's "influential formulation of drag as an ironic, humorous, subcultural performance that 'questions the 'naturalness' of the sex role system in toto,' including the notion of maleness and femaleness as polar opposites," Seymour suggests that animal drag "questions the 'naturalness' of what we might call the species role system, which is organized around the supposedly opposing poles of humanity and animality" (2015, 262). The species role system, says Seymour, "is propped up by human and, not coincidentally, gendered—rituals such as hunting, meat-eating, and taxidermy" (2015, 262). Such humanist rituals reinforce the illusion of a "natural" human-animal divide much as gendered rituals reinforce a false gender binary. Again quoting Newton, Seymour points out that "'drag' has come to have a broader referent [than wearing the clothes of the so-called opposite sex]," and that any clothing that signals a social role (i.e., "fireman's suit or farmer's overalls") can be considered drag (2015, 262). Importantly, both humans and nonhuman animals occupy social roles (Seymour 2015, 262). Though costuming is a common component of children's animal play, there is no indication that the child animals in *Dyrehagen Hardanger* are dressed as animals. Rather, I treat their behaviors as

expressions of species drag. In fact, the lack of animal costuming in Fosse's text hints at the blurry line between child and animal, between performance and being. As Judith Butler writes of being a lesbian, "to say that I 'play' at being one is not to say that I am not one 'really'" (1993, 311).

Before discussing *Dyrehagen Hardanger* I finally want to suggest that the concept of drag applies not just to the child-animals of the story but also to the text itself. One could say that language is a form of drag: always performance, always metaphor, always repeating itself to make meaning with no original referent. As indicated above, this is something Fosse constantly draws attention to in his brilliant and strange construction of dialogue. Here, though, I mean something more specific—that *Dyrehagen Hardanger* is a text in children's literature drag. By this I do not mean that it is a text for adults "pretending" to be a children's text. *Dyrehagen Hardanger* was published for children, it is written in language accessible to child readers, and its form and content would be familiar to a child audience. Indeed, this is the point with drag: it is not hiding some original; rather, it exposes all identities, genders, and genres as performed. This is precisely what Fosse's text does for children's literature. It performs—and is—children's literature in ways that draw attention to that fact.

How does Fosse's text perform its children's literature-ness? The naming convention mentioned above is significant. Anthropomorphism is so commonplace in children's texts that readers are well trained to accept rather passively animal characters that have names and act like humans. A text like *Peter Rabbit* draws attention to the strangeness of this convention, for example by highlighting the question of clothing and of the relationship between animals and farmers. *Dyrehagen Hardanger*, I argue, goes further than *Peter Rabbit* in highlighting human-animal difference and continuity, in part through its insistent, almost hyperbolic use of the naming convention so common in children's texts. Each time Fosse's narrator names "Tiger Knut" or "Zookeeper Helge," the reader is slightly jolted: unlike in most children's texts where such labels are accurate and (ostensibly) transparent, in Fosse's text they seem misleading, confusing, complex. Tiger Knut is not a tiger. Or is he? If he says he is one? If he acts like one? The way Fosse uses names highlights the strangeness of naming animals, but it also highlights the strangeness of naming humans. There is nothing natural about either practice. Indeed, in Fosse's text the "Zookeeper Helge" label seems just as complicated as that of "Tiger Knut." Both zookeeper and tiger move in and out of those identities. Where the human and animal positions are unstable, neither can be taken for granted.

One other way in which Fosse's text draws attention to its genre is through its lack of illustrations. (The exception is the cover illustration, which I return to in this section's conclusion.) Though not all children's chapter books of its length and reading level contain illustrations, most do. In addition to the aesthetic value illustrations contribute, they can serve to confirm or clarify aspects of the text. When thinking about characters in some kind of drag, the visual elements of a text play a particularly important role. In *Peter Rabbit*, the text tells readers the main character wears clothes like a boy, and the illustrations confirm that. This helps to make Peter Rabbit's human drag especially convincing. In Fosse's text, by contrast, where no illustrations confirm or deny the animal drag (or zookeeper drag) of the

child characters, the reader may be less certain of the characters' identities and, perhaps, of their species. This is especially the case in the text's first few pages, in which it is not immediately clear that this is a story about children playing zoo, and not simply a children's text—like so many others—about a real zoo. Indeed, because the naming of Zookeeper Helge, Tiger Knut, and others evokes for the reader other texts in which such names can be taken at face value, she initially has no reason to believe they conceal as much as they reveal. It is not until some strange details surface—the animal cages are made of fruit crates, the monkey can speak (though this too is confusing since many children's texts have speaking human *and* animal characters)—that the reader realizes this is no ordinary zoo. I want to suggest that Fosse's text draws attention to two kinds of drag. The first is the drag of visual and behavioral disguise, which I argue is represented in the animal drag of its child characters. The second is the drag of verbal disguise, which is represented in the text's language. The language of Fosse's text performs like that of many other children's texts; however, it does so in a way that draws attention to that fact, thus inviting the reader to question its transparency. Both visual and verbal drag in this text are slippery and unstable. Indeed, Fosse's text seems suspicious that drag can succeed—that a child can be convincing as an animal, that a text can be a children's text—even as it is invested in exploring the possibility of those expressions.

Animal Drag and the High Stakes of Pretend Play

Dyrehagen Hardanger consists of nine short chapters. My analysis treats the text in three sections. In the first section (chapters 1–4), Zookeepers Jon and Helge visit the various animals at Hardanger Zoo. The text's setting in Hardanger is significant. Hardanger is the rural western region of Norway in which Fosse grew up. That Fosse names one of his protagonists "Jon" may hint at an autobiographical strain in the text. Hardanger is also significant for its importance to Norwegian nation building. The region loomed (and looms) large in the Norwegian National Romantic imagination for its crafts, music, and especially for its dramatic fjord landscape. While *Dyrehagen Hardanger* could hardly be said to promote nation building in the way that "Lille Alvilde" does, its evocation of Hardanger and of a rural Norwegian childhood puts it in conversation with the longstanding tradition of national children's literature in Norway. The fact that Fosse's text ignores the National Romantic associations of Hardanger suggests a kind of resistance to these tropes on the author's part. The "zoo" of *Dyrehagen Hardanger* is located in Jon's grandfather's barn and the "animals" live in cages made of old fruit crates. These first chapters culminate in a raucous climax that illuminates the complex stakes of species drag. In the second section (chapters 5–6), Jon's mother and grandmother visit the zoo, juxtaposing the adult position with the child realm of pretend play. The final section (chapters 7–9) is a denouement in which the structure and stakes of zoo play abruptly dissipate. It is no great leap to think of these three sections as "acts" in Fosse's text, especially since the style in *Dyrehagen Hardanger* resembles that in Fosse's plays (including a strong emphasis on dialogue). I address this aspect of the text throughout my analysis.

Chapters 1–4 of Fosse’s text are structured around two competing concerns for Zookeepers Jon and Helge: recapturing the escaped Tiger Knut and attending to the zoo’s other animals. When Helge suggests he and Jon should leave the zoo to look for Knut, Jon says he thinks it is best to wait a while.

- Kvifor det?” seier dyrepassar Helge.
- For det, seier dyrepassar Jon.
- For det for det, seier dyrepassar Helge.
- Ja, seier dyrepassar Jon. (Fosse 1993, 7)

(“Why?” says Zookeeper Helge.
“Because,” says Zookeeper Jon.
“Because because,” says Zookeeper Helge.
“Yes,” says Zookeeper Jon.)

In this exchange that is so typical of Fosse’s style, Jon and Helge come to a kind of uncomfortable agreement about a problem whose stakes are difficult to articulate. For the zookeepers Jon and Helge, the problem is a tiger on the loose. For the boys Jon and Helge, the problem is an outright challenge to the game of zoo, and to the very premises of pretend play. Helge is concerned that Knut no longer wants his role: “kanskje stikk han til og med heim, kanskje vil ikkje Knut vere tiger meir” (8–9) [maybe he even went home, maybe Knut doesn’t want to be a tiger anymore]. Jon does not accept this possibility. He says, “Knut er ikkje Knut, for Knut er Tigeren Knut” (9) [Knut isn’t Knut because Knut is Tiger Knut]. Helge counters, “Knut er Knut” (9) [Knut is Knut]. As this conversation reveals, the status of Knut is impossible to pin down: Is he a boy? A tiger? A boy playing tiger? Or just himself? Interestingly, the Norwegian name Knut means “knot”: the missing tiger child is a tangle of identities.

The dynamic between Jon and Helge depicted in this exchange persists throughout the text. While Helge is often concerned about the tenuousness of pretend play, pointing out the cracks in the system, Jon embraces a strategy of denial and delay: he is willing to risk the structure of the game in favor of immersion in the present. Though Jon appears to be the dominant figure (Helge generally accedes to Jon’s terms, as in the conversation above), Helge possesses subtle power. This is observable, for example, when Jon and Helge visit Apekatten Olav (Monkey Olav). Monkey Olav appears to be content; he “kastar ivrig hovudet sitt frå side til side” (Fosse 1993, 7) [eagerly shakes his head from side to side]. “Godt at Apekatten Olav har det godt” (7) [It’s good that Monkey Olav is doing well], says Zookeeper Jon approvingly. Helge, however, seems less secure. In a scene that repeats itself throughout the text, Helge approaches Jon and whispers in his ear:

Og så kjem Helge med munnen sin bort i øyra på Jon, og han kviskrar at i dag må ikkje Jon spørje om Olav vil ha banan, for viss Olav så ikkje får banan, så blir han berre lei seg, for Olav skjønar ikkje heilt kva som er spøk og alvor, han. (Fosse 1993, 7)

(And then Helge brings his mouth to Jon’s ear and he whispers that today Jon mustn’t ask whether Olav wants a banana because if Olav doesn’t get his banana he’ll just get upset, because Olav doesn’t really understand what is pretend and what is real.)

One way to read Helge's repeated whisperings is as a form of stage directions—those subtle yet critical notes in a script, which, via production, lend nuance and credence to the drama. Indeed, in this and other instances, Helge warns Jon about how his actions might disrupt the delicate balance required to maintain a scene of pretend play. Significantly, Helge here tells Jon that Olav cannot distinguish between what is a “pretend” and what is “real”—that is, Olav may not understand that if he is promised a banana in context of playing zoo, he may not actually get a banana. (Perhaps Olav is a slightly younger child who does not grasp the rules of pretend the way Jon and Helge do.) Helge might also be read as occupying a kind of directorial role: his direction—often whispered, and thus “off stage” relative to the primary drama unfolding in the zoo—mediates between the worlds of real and pretend.

Despite Helge's warning, Zookeeper Jon asks if Monkey Olav would like a banana. “Ja” (Fosse 1993, 7) [yes], Olav replies. As Myers points out, children often move in and out of “human scripts” (2007, 160), including the use of speech, when pretending to be animals. In many animal-play scenarios, a child's fluctuating between human speech and grunts or growls proceeds without notice. For Jon, however, talking is a clear violation of the rules of playing the animal. “Du skal få banan, viss du berre sluttar med snakkinga di” (Fosse 1993, 7) [You'll get the banana as long as you stop with your talking], Jon tells Olav. The child animals at Hardanger Zoo often shift between human speech and animal sounds to express themselves. Villsvinet Bård (Boar Bård) is an example. Bård is bored of playing the Boar; all he gets to do is sleep. “Eg vil vere Bjørnen Bård” (19) [I want to be Bear Bård], Bård says to Jon and Helge. “Ein annan dag” (19) [Another day], Helge says. “Gryyyyyynt” (19), replies Bård, voicing the boar. Though Bård complains in human language about having to play the boar (an attempt to negotiate the terms of play), he replies *as* the boar to express begrudging consent. Bård's “gryyyyyynt” might be read as a show of submission; however, here and elsewhere, I read the child's voicing the animal as part of an “ironic, humorous, subcultural performance” (per Newton's definition of drag) that undercuts the terms of the dominant, norming, and “human” zookeepers.

Indeed, the power dynamics in Hardanger Zoo are complex. In one sense, the zookeepers appear to be in a position of significant power. The text shows Jon and Helge moving from cage to cage and glancing around the barn, creating the sense of the zoo-as-prison and of zookeepers as guards. However, enforcing proper animal behavior is tricky business—and in this case it is doubly so, as enforcement entails two levels of control: the zookeepers must first ensure the child animals stay in character; they must then ensure the animals do not get out of hand. When the child animals break character (mostly through speaking), Jon employs both stick and carrot to get them back on track: he utters the punishing refrain “du øydelegg alt” [you're ruining everything] (no child wants to be responsible for ruining the game) and then promises a banana for staying in character. For controlling animal behavior, classic methods—captivity and force—are used: Bjørn Per [Bear Per] is bound by a rope to the side of his cage, the ostriches (three girls) are wrangled after escaping, and Zookeeper Jon gives Ostrich Kari “eit dask på stjerten” (Fosse 1993,

15) [a slap on the tail] once she is finally reined in. “No var Strutsen Kari flink” (15) [Now Ostrich Kari is being good], Jon says.

The sexual overtones of the ostrich “tail” slap are elaborated in a scene of horse flirtation, which Jon and Helge observe. Behind the fruit-crate fence of their enclosure, Hoppa Anne Marie (Filly Anne Marie) and Hingsten Rune (Stallion Rune) are frolicking. “Hoppa Anne Marie og Hingsten Rune [...] ser så vakkert mot kvarandre” (Fosse 1993, 20) [Filly Anne Marie and Stallion Rune look so lovingly at each other], says Zookeeper Helge. “Så fin Hoppa Anne Marie er” (Fosse 1993, 20) [Filly Anne Marie is so pretty], says Zookeeper Jon. “Han er heldig, Hingsten Rune” (21) [That Stallion Rune is lucky], adds Jon. “Den heldigaste iblant oss” (21) [The luckiest among us], replies Helge. Jon and Helge watch as Filly Anne Marie and Stallion Rune rub their “manane” [manes] and their “mulane” [muzzles] together (21). Myers argues that because animals exist outside the bounds of human social norms, engaging in animal play can give children a sense of permission to behave improperly, to “explore the forbidden” (2007, 160). Anne Marie and Rune’s explicit flirtation and bodily rubbing might be an example of this: perhaps as horses they feel more comfortable asserting their fledgling desire. Even more interesting is the way Jon and Helge respond to this scene, as they model a range of potentially taboo behaviors: they are openly voyeuristic, their shared expression of desire has a homosocial—even homoerotic—flare, and—most significantly—they express desire for the animal subject. It is not Anne Marie who is pretty, but *Filly* Anne Marie; it is not Rune, but *Stallion* Rune, whose position is admired. I read this scene as one of queer child desire: unsupervised by adults, “delay” goes “unmanaged,” and sideways growth runs amok. Sexual and bodily desire is expressed for and through the animal.

Suddenly, Jon and Helge are distracted by the “Bruuum bruum brum” of Bear Per. After tugging at his rope, the bear has come loose. Bear Per’s heavy body “ruggar från side til side” (Fosse 1993, 22) [rocks from side to side] as he approaches the ostrich cage, his “lange, nesten kvite tunga” (22) [long, almost white tongue] hanging out of his mouth. The lolling tongue may signal the bear’s hunger (Zookeeper Jon worries the bear will eat the ostriches) or it may indicate lust: Helge whispers to Jon that he believes “Per er forelska i Anne Marit, det er nok derfor bjørnen liksom skal ha slite seg, for at Per skal få komme bort til Anne Marit” (24) [Per is in love with Anne Marit; that’s probably why the bear broke loose, so that Per could get to Anne Marit]. Helge’s account elegantly parses the human and the animal in the Bear-Per equation, while showing how bound up human and animal are: the bear, embodied and motivated by Per, acts on Per’s behalf; the animal mediates the human’s (primal) desires. While Zookeepers Jon and Helge bicker about how to capture Bear Per, the bear approaches the ostriches, who begin to cry, “kooo koo ko!” Suddenly, Bear Per jumps at Ostrich Anne Marit; she falls to the floor and Bear Per lies on top of her. At this point, chaos erupts in full. Zookeepers Jon and Helge try to lift Bear Per off of Ostrich Anne Marit, but the bear “gjer seg så tung han berre kan” (27) [just makes himself as heavy as possible]. “Det gjer vondt” (27) [it hurts], says Anne Marit, “eg får ikkje puste” (27) [I can’t breathe]. Rather than comfort Anne Marit, Helge chastises her for speaking: “du øydelegg alt” (Fosse 1993, 27). The other girls come to Anne Marit’s defense: “Ho må jo få puste” (27) [she has to be able

to breathe], says Hilde; “er de heilt galne” (27) [are you totally crazy], says Kari. “De øydelegg alt” (27) [you’re ruining everything], says Jon to Hilde and Kari. “Vi øydelegg ikkje, de øydelegg” (27) [We’re not ruining it, you are], say Hilde and Kari to the boys. Aroused by the commotion, Monkey Olav shouts “Banan! Banan!” (Fosse 1993, 27) [Banana! Banana!]. Finally, of his own accord, Bear Per props himself up on his knees and “forlabbane” (28) [front paws]. Ostrich Anne Marit, still beneath him, says “kooo koo ko” (28).

This scene is remarkable for how it puts a range of power dynamics and species identities on display. Formerly in control, the zookeepers are challenged by the mass and drive of the bear, as well as by the ethical claims of the girls. The idea of the bear “making himself as heavy as possible” registers both as the child’s strategy of being physically totally uncooperative and as the “bodily translation” that Myers describes: Per *becomes* the heavy bear. When Hilde and Kari declare Anne Marit cannot breathe, they show that violating a child’s (specifically, a girl’s) safety is their limit on pretend play. And yet, this scene does not suggest they want the play to stop. When Hilde and Kari say to Jon and Helge, “we’re not ruining it, you are,” they are making a claim for adjusting the limits of the game, rather than ending it. This reading is supported by Anne Marit’s response to the situation once Bear Per lifts his body off hers. Rather than flee or break character, she voices her ostrich. Indeed, this scene is fascinating for how its gender dynamics do not play out according to familiar narratives. When Anne Marit is physically dominated by the boy body of Per, we might expect her to be hurt, victimized. When Hilde and Kari come to her defense, a counternarrative to boy violence is suggested: girls stand up for each other and win. However, ultimately something stranger and subtler happens. When Anne Marit is finally freed from the weight of Bear Per, her response—“kooo koo ko”—is more ironic than victorious. This is a moment of comic relief in which the female, animal voice undercuts the authority of boys and humans.

The chapters I have examined in Fosse’s text thus far offer a striking portrait of animal drag. In her discussion of gendered practices as drag, Judith Butler says that she does not understand drag as “a ‘role’ that can be taken on or off at will” (1993, 314). This is what I mean to suggest about the animal drag in Fosse’s text. Although one could argue that the children at Hardanger Zoo *choose* to play animals, much of their animal-like behavior appears impulsive and unpredictable—including to the child-animals themselves. And though the children’s moving back and forth between human and animal “scripts” could be read as willful (taking the animal “on” and “off”), I read the child and animal positions as continuous (following Myers) rather than as at odds with each other. This child-animal continuity poses a challenge to a false human-animal binary much like the fluidity of gender, demonstrated through drag, explodes the concept of male-female dualism. Butler writes, “that heterosexuality is always in the act of elaborating itself is evidence that it is perpetually at risk, that is, that it ‘knows’ its own possibility of becoming undone” (1993, 314) What Butler claims about heterosexuality can also be said of humanity: humans’ constant efforts to define ourselves against and above other species proves the tenuousness of our position. Fosse’s text puts pressure on the notion of a human-animal divide.

Much of what creates a sense of child-animal continuity in *Dyrehagen Hardanger* is in Fosse's narration. As my analysis suggests, Fosse's narrator lends credence to the child-animal position by presenting these figures in terms that acknowledge their animality. The most prominent example of this is the child voicing the animal accompanied by the animal naming convention: "Brum bruum bruum, seier Bjørnen Per" (Fosse 1993, 14) ["Brum bruum bruum," says Bear Per]. Though the reader is arguably invited to interpret this ironically—that is, as an exaggeration or subversion of a children's text trope that draws attention to performance and play—the use of the convention nonetheless reinforces the child-animal position since the narrator does not explicitly challenge, explain, or deconstruct the child-animal figuration. Indeed, the narrator, a source of authority and thus a kind of "adult" figure, is largely aligned with the perspective and purpose of the text's child characters. Figuring the narrator as an adult or authority figure who is aligned with (though an outsider to) the world of child-animal drag becomes starker in context of the scene examined below, in which adult and authority figures within the text do not support the realm of child-animal play. In addition to the animal voicing and naming conventions, Fosse's narrator invokes its child characters' animality in subtler ways—namely, by referring to the child-animals' body parts using animal terms: mane, muzzle, paws, tail.⁵⁷ Though the adult reader of Fosse's text in particular will understand these as analogs for human body parts, the fact that their mention draws less attention than the animal naming convention means they are more easily assimilated by the reader, taken for granted in a way that "Bear Per" perhaps is not. I read these moments as examples of the narrator's commitment to the child-as-animal figuration.

I also want to suggest that the tenuousness of the human-animal divide is reinforced by the subgenre of Fosse's text—namely, that of the children's zoo story. Among the many examples of zoo stories in children's literature are *Curious George Visits the Zoo* (Rey and Shalleck 2013), in which Curious George steals the zookeeper's bananas and feeds the monkeys himself, and *Goodnight Gorilla* (Rathmann, 1994), in which the zoo's gorilla unlocks all the animals' cages and the animals follow the zookeeper home and sleep in his room. The zoo turned upside-down is indeed a trope of many children's texts. The inversion of human and animal roles is entertaining for children, but critically, it also directly challenges human-animal hierarchies. In children's texts, the institution meant to tame and cage wild animals often proves the setting for a range of unexpected species roles. Fosse's zoo story elaborates on this tradition.

After the bear-ostrich chaos subsides, Zookeepers Jon and Helge decide to leave the barn to search for Tiger Knut. But just as they exit, they hear footsteps approaching. Jon suggests it is probably someone who wants to visit Hardanger Zoo. "Sikkert" (Fosse 1993, 32) [Definitely], affirms Helge. Two women approach: it is

⁵⁷ As mentioned in the previous section, Tove Jansson does something similar when she describes all of her characters, including those who appear most human-like, as having "paws." This is a striking example in which the reader is invited to interpret against the evidence of an illustration, since the "paws" of a character such as Too-ticki have five fingers and strongly resemble a human hand. The incongruence deconstructs a human-animal binary.

Jon's mother and grandmother. Jon says they must pay to enter. "Slutt å tulle" (33) [Stop joking around], says Jon's mother. But Jon insists: the animals need to be fed, the zookeepers need to be paid. After Jon's Grandmother promises everyone will get a banana (apparently the currency of Hardanger Zoo), Jon lets the visitors in. As soon as Jon's mother and grandmother enter the zoo, however, they drop all pretense. Upon seeing the various children in cages, the adults begin to laugh uncontrollably. "Dette er ikkje nokon vits" (35) [This isn't a joke], says Jon. "Dette er ein dyrehage" (35) [This is a zoo], says Helge. But the women cannot stop laughing. "De øydelegg alt" (36) [They're ruining everything], says Jon, shifting the blame for ruining the game from child animals breaking character to adults who openly mock them. When Jon's mother and grandmother finally stop laughing, Jon and Helge proceed with a tour. For the most part, the zoo's animals are quiet. As the visitors approach a large animal, Jon's mother and grandmother guess it might be a ram or an ox. Jon is frustrated that they do not recognize Per as a Bear and he fears the adults are again making fun. But mother and grandmother play along as Jon tells the story of the bear's earlier escape and attack on the ostriches. The tour proceeds smoothly until Boar Bård calls out, "eg vil ikkje vere villsvin meir [...] eg vil vere bjørn" (41–42) [I don't want to be the boar anymore ... I want to be the bear], causing Jon's mother and grandmother to again burst into laughter.

The adult response of laughter to the children playing zoo is worth examining. What is the function of this laughter and what does it say about the adults? The laughter of Jon's mother and grandmother is not the contained laughter of adults who find children's play charming; it is a mocking laughter, a hurtful laughter. When Jon tells his mother and grandmother about the bear attack on the ostriches, they show no concern: perhaps they do not believe the attack was physically aggressive, or perhaps they are not really listening. In any case, the adults do not take the child-animal play seriously. One might read the adult laughter in this scene as representing an accurate, mature, outsider perspective on child-animal play, a kind of counterpart to the narrator who generally "plays along" with the children's agenda. Indeed, if the reader has become invested in the premise of Hardanger Zoo, the arrival of Jon's mother and grandmother might make her question that investment: is it all just ridiculous and unimportant? I think the more likely response, however, is that the reader, like the zookeepers and child-animals, will experience Jon's mother and grandmother as interlopers, as unsympathetic adults who fail to appreciate the stakes of the game. This laughter can also, I argue, be interpreted in context of Stockton's notion of "managed delay." For the first half of Fosse's text childhood delay is totally unmanaged as the child characters display animal embodiment, physical aggression, and sexual antics. The laughter of Jon's mother and grandmother, however, acts as a powerful tool for managing the child's development. Their laughter draws a clear line between animal and human, child and adult, the pretend and the real. These chapters halfway through Fosse's text, and the disruptive laughter of the adults in particular, initiate the story's denouement.

Before analyzing the remainder of the text, I want to consider one other point of interest in relation to the question of laughter. *Dyrehagen Hardanger* was adapted for the stage in 2012 (Fauskanger 2012). It toured throughout Norway and was

promoted for a family audience. Fosse was not involved in the project. The play featured adult actors and, as photographs of the performance show, they were not dressed as animals (or zookeepers). In other words, the stage version of *Dyrehagen Hardanger* features adults playing children playing animals. (One critic suggested this made the performance hard to follow (Larsen 2012).) Conceptually this is interesting for how it adds layers to the questions of play versus performance and of childhood versus adulthood evoked by Fosse's text. Though I cannot comment on the performance, I want to comment on one aspect of the script. The script follows Fosse's text closely, often to the word. It contains, however, a striking deviation from the original in the scene in which Jon's mother and grandmother visit Hardanger Zoo. Frustrated by the adult laughter, Helge says in the script, "ein ler ikkje av dyr" (Rasch and Stavland 2011, 26) [one doesn't laugh at animals]. In Fosse's original, Jon and Helge say things like "stop laughing" and "it's not funny" to Jon's mother and grandmother, but never, "one doesn't laugh at animals." This line offers a conspicuous interpretation of what we might call Helge's and Jon's theoretical position as (zoo)keepers of animal play. On the one hand, the statement—"one doesn't laugh at animals"—is easily contradicted. In fact, humans laugh at animals all the time. Specifically, humans tend to find animals funny when embedded in human cultural contexts (cat videos, zoo visits, etc.). Relatedly, humans tend to laugh at species inversion: humans in animal drag, and vice versa. From Jon's mother's and grandmother's position, Helge's statement hardly holds up. On the other hand, one does not tend to laugh at animals outside of human cultural contexts. Animals in the wild and animals behaving "as animals" more often attract human reverence, curiosity, or indifference than laughter. In the stage version of Fosse's text, Helge's words evoke a sentiment also present in the original: the child characters want their animal drag to be acknowledged, understood, and believed.

Fed up with the adults, Jon and Helge leave the barn. Jon suggests they walk to the store to get bananas for the zoo's animals. Helge asks Jon if he has money for the bananas; Jon does not, but says "vent og sjå" (Fosse 1993, 44) [wait and see]. When they arrive at the store, they see Knut sitting outside, eating candy. "Der er jo Tigeren Knut!" (45) [There's Tiger Knut!], shouts Zookeeper Helge. But Knut yells back that he does not want to play anymore. Jon asks why not. "Er kjedeleg" (45) [It's boring], replies Knut simply. Jon and Helge leave Knut to his candy while they go inside the store. There, the boys meet the shopkeeper who greets them professionally (unlike Jon's mother and grandmother, he plays along): "er det dryepassar Jon og kollegen hans frå Dyrehagen Hardanger" (46) [is that Zookeeper Jon and his colleague from the Hardanger Zoo]? Apparently, the shopkeeper and Zookeeper Jon have an arrangement. The shopkeeper gives the boys half a box of bananas and they head outside. When Knut sees the bananas, he is happy to resume his role as tiger. He licks his lips and says "vræææl vrææl vræl" (49). Zookeeper Helge takes Tiger Knut by the sleeve and they walk back to the Hardanger Zoo.

As Jon, Helge, and Knut walk through the yard to Jon's grandfather's barn, Helge says, "men no må ikkje Mannen med stokken sjå oss" (Fosse 1993, 50) [but The Man with the Cane mustn't see us]. "Mannen med stokken" is a significant figure in Fosse's text. Early in the text, the narrator explains his role in terms that capture the child characters' perspective:

Og bestefaren til Jon lar Jon og dei andre få leike seg på låven sin, men viss dei bråkar likar han det ikkje. Då kjem han gåande med stokken sin. Og då er han blitt til Mannen med stokken. Og bestefaren til Jon er ein svær mann. Og han kan komme gåande med stokken sin. Og være Mannen med stokken. Og då er ikkje alltid Mannen med stokken god å ha med å gjere. (Fosse 1993, 10)

(And Jon's grandfather lets Jon and the others play in his barn but if they make noise he doesn't like it. Then he comes walking with his cane. And that's how he became The Man with the Cane. And Jon's grandpa is a hard man. And he can come walking with his cane. And be The Man with the Cane. And so it's best not to have anything to do with The Man with the Cane.)

Calling Jon's grandfather The Man with the Cane allows the children to incorporate this figure into their realm of pretend. Though Jon's grandfather may in fact just be a curmudgeon who wants the kids to keep it down, The Man with the Cane—with his title and his stick—is clearly imagined as a figure of authority and control. The Man with the Cane is named no fewer than fifteen times throughout the text, suggesting that his presence is never forgotten by the child characters. He is in the background, yet omnipresent. Especially given the theatrical traits of *Dyrehagen Hardanger* and the context of Fosse's dramaturgical oeuvre, The Man with the Cane evokes an iconic character of Scandinavian drama—namely, *Greven* (The Count) of August Strindberg's *Fröken Julie* [1888; *Miss Julie*]. Like The Count, The Man with the Cane is (almost) entirely absent from the main scene of the play, yet his presence and power are impossible to ignore. In *Miss Julie*, the metonym for The Count is the service bell. Each time it rings, Jean and Julie, in the servants' quarters, are reminded of the unseen hand of authority. In Fosse's text, the metonym for "Mannen med stokken" is a hand with a cane. Here, the hand is seen—at least in the book's cover illustration.

As mentioned, the cover illustration is *Dyrehagen Hardanger's* only picture. This gives the illustration certain power, as it is the reader's only visual reference for the text. Cover images function somewhat differently than illustrations found throughout a text, as cover images often condense a text's meaning. I read the cover illustration of *Dyrehagen Hardanger* as an overture of the text's key themes. The illustration shows the inside of a barn. Three ostriches, a bear, and a monkey are contained in cages made of wooden crates; a boar stands in front of the crates. A bunch of blackened bananas hangs over the animals' heads. In the background, the barn door is open and just outside the door, an aging hand grips a cane. The hand and cane are exaggerated in size: the cane nearly fills the height of the door and the hand is larger than the bear's head. This illustration is striking indeed in context of my argument: the cover does not feature children playing as animals—but *animals*. In the illustration, the animal drag is complete. Of course, as I have argued throughout this section, Fosse's text invites us to read against its claims, to deconstruct its drag. The same can be said of the cover, though it is only after reading the text that one will grasp the illustration's deceptions. Or is it deception? Though the adults in Fosse's text may be unconvinced by the child characters' animal drag, the children are, I argue, at least intermittently convinced by and committed to that drag. Both the cover's "real" animals and the outsized hand with a

cane can be understood as representing the text's child characters' perspective. As I have claimed, Fosse's text invites readers to sympathize with the child characters' perspective, to tap into or perhaps remember those slippery moments in which becoming the animal other is embodied, performed, real.

This slipperiness is present in the book's penultimate scene. After successfully passing *The Man with the Cane*, who shakes his head in disapproval (or perhaps disinterest) at this game of boys, beasts, and bananas, Jon and his friends make their way back to the barn. Once there, the Zookeepers reassume their roles. "Dette må gjerast skikkeleg" (Fosse 1993, 52) [This must be done properly], says Zookeeper Jon; "Ja, matinga er viktig" (52) [Yes, feeding is important], says Zookeeper Helge. After they make much of the importance of feeding the animals of Hardanger Zoo, Helge pauses and addresses Jon:

— Hadde du tenkt det ut, at vi skulle leike dyrehage i dag, og så skulle du komme med bananar? spør Helge.

— Hald kjeft, du øydelegg, seier dyrepassar Jon.

— Men hadde du det? seier Helge.

— Ja då, seier Jon.

Og dyrepassar Jon går inn gjennom låvedøra med bananøskja framfor seg. (Fosse 1993, 52-53)

("Had you thought it out, that we would play zoo today, and that you'd get the bananas?" asks Helge.

"Shut up, you're ruining it," says Zookeeper Jon.

"But did you?" says Helge.

"Yeah," says Jon.

And Zookeeper Jon goes into the barn, carrying the box of bananas.)

Though Helge has questioned the game of zoo throughout the text, here he "ruins it" for good. Jon's authority, his authorship (perhaps another invocation of the text's author) is exposed as a ruse. This is a critical moment both for the problem of growing up and for the arc of the narrative, since, throughout the text, the prospect of "ruining" the game has been the source of suspense for both. From Jon's frequent admonishments of the other children when they "break character," to Jon and Helge's insistence that Jon's mother and grandmother respect the rules of the game, to rendering Jon's grandfather as *The Man with the Cane*, the prospect of "ruining" the fiction has framed what is at stake for development (of children and narratives) and for authorship. In the scene above, the stakes of play are suddenly and irreversibly diminished. The tension around who gets to control the narrative (adults? children? animals?) dissolves in an anticlimax whose ambivalence is only enhanced by the text's final, two-page chapter. There, Zookeepers Jon and Helge discover that there are no longer any animals to feed at Hardanger Zoo: in their absence, the other children have gone home. Helge suggests they can feed the animals the next day. Encouraged, Jon replies, "det kan vi vel" (Fosse 1993, 55) [yes we can]. The text ends with Jon, Helge, and Knut eating bananas.

Dyrehagen Hardanger stages the transition from childhood to adolescence as one in which pretend play becomes less and less tenable with time. Critically, Fosse's text suggests that this process entails fluctuations between positions: child

and adult, pretend and real, animal and human. Indeed, even as the text ends, the possibility of immersive play is at least hanging on by a thread, though its eventual disappearance seems all but certain. In this sense, *Dyrehagen Hardanger* would appear to represent a version of normative development: working through the animal via the mode of animal drag, the child characters have grown closer to the adult position, which in this text is largely suggested to be realist, authoritative, and cynical. Jon's mother, grandmother, and grandfather each do their part in managing childhood delay. They achieve this through the tools of laughter, dismissal, and disapproval. Though I do not read Fosse's text as an outright critique of "managed delay" or "straight" childhood development, the narrator's empathy with the child position and the unsympathetic portraits of Jon's mother, grandmother, and grandfather suggest that adult intervention in the realm of child play is powerful, if not damaging. One wonders what might have happened at Hardanger Zoo had the adults never come to visit, or if The Man with the Cane did not loom so large. Would the zoo play have gone on for longer, would it have become more immersive? Would the various forms of drag have fluctuated indefinitely? Fosse's inclusion of an adult character who is sympathetic to the children's play (the storekeeper) subtly suggests a model of adulthood that does not discourage sideways growth. Though ultimately managed, I argue that the sideways growth at Hardanger Zoo expressed through animal drag points to a continuity between the animal and the child that is embodied and sometimes hard to tame. The productive tension around the problem of "ruining" the game, which creates a remarkable suspense throughout the text, dramatizes the stakes of growing up. These stakes are set in even higher relief in the final example considered in this dissertation, the documentary film *Hobbyhorse Revolution*.

***Hobbyhorse Revolution* and the Child-Animal Figuration as Twenty-First Century Cyborg**

In 2012, Finnish filmmaker Selma Vilhunen came across a remarkable and strange online community: hobbyhorse enthusiasts. On internet message boards and in online videos, Vilhunen discovered a group of Finnish girls and teenagers who manufactured, named, cared for, and rode hobbyhorses in the tradition of horse dressage. The online community had spurred a network of friendships, coaching, and even organized competitions, though it remained largely hidden to the public. "It was like a secret society," noted Vilhunen (Barry 2019). Many of the hobbyhorse enthusiasts considered themselves outsiders, had been bullied for their hobbyhorsing, or were told they were too old for such a childish interest. Vilhunen, however, saw in the hobbyhorse community a space for joy, solidarity, and female empowerment—a narrative she captures in her internationally acclaimed 2017 documentary, *Hobbyhorse Revolution*. Though my focus in this section is on Vilhunen's film, I also consider Finnish hobbyhorsing as a cultural phenomenon. Indeed, Vilhunen's film has often been treated as a stand-in for the trend itself. Though most responses to *Hobbyhorse Revolution* have been positive and in keeping with the celebratory tone of the film, some negative—even virulent—responses have suggested the hobbyhorse girls are immature, backwards, or queer (in a

pejorative sense). The most vicious of these critiques have been directed at adult female hobbyhorsers, as the trend has become increasingly popular among grown women. Clearly, the hobbyhorse girl (or woman) is implicated in a Stocktonian argument: “sideways growth” has extended too far; not only has the girl grown too close to the animal, but to one that is not even *real*. In this final section of the dissertation, I examine how the Finnish girl on her hobbyhorse offers an elegant illustration of the concerns of this project, as the hobbyhorser refuses the social and even biological boundaries of age, sexuality, and species.

Girls and Horses: A Queer History

Before discussing Vilhunen’s documentary, I will offer critical context on the history of girl-horse relationships and girl-horse narratives, which Susan McHugh and Amalya Layla Ashman consider in their research. Given the countless books, movies, toys, and summer camps dedicated to girls and horses, it would seem the two are a “natural” pair. However, “images and stories pairing girls and horses” were rare prior to the twentieth century (McHugh 2011, 65). For centuries prior, horsemanship—the term clearly genders the practice—was the domain of men. Good horsemanship was variously associated with skill, status, hunting, and war. However, as horses became less central to social, agricultural, and industrial practices, “the responsibility of breaking-in and maintaining the horse in the stables shifted from men to women” (Ashman 2017, 155). Yet, women of this period were not supposed to ride horses—or at least not as men did. As Ashman points out, the sidesaddle was invented “to preserve the female sex” (2017, 156). This was meant literally: riding astride, the thinking went, could break the woman’s hymen (Ashman 156). Perhaps the greater danger, however, was that of female pleasure: riding the horse astride was thought to arouse the female rider sexually, perhaps even stimulating her desire for the horse (Ashman 156).

This danger is evoked in many girl-horse narratives, which skyrocketed in popularity in the first half of the twentieth century. Perhaps the most famous of these is Enid Bagnold’s novel *National Velvet*, in which a fourteen-year-old girl, Velvet Brown, trains and rides a horse to victory in the Grand National steeplechase (Bagnold [1935] 1999). Bagnold’s text is riddled with “double-entendres and allusions to sex,” including Velvet’s unabashed admiration for her male horse’s physicality (Ashman 2017, 160). In the novel’s most suggestive scene, Velvet pretends to ride her horse while in bed, a string wrapped around her feet for reins, her body bouncing, her breath heavy. It would be difficult to deny this as a scene of masturbation in which horses and horse riding are the source of arousal.⁵⁸ Depictions of the “horse-crazy” (McHugh) or “pony-mad” (Ashman) girl are not uncommon in fiction. In such narratives, the adolescent girl and her horse pose a threat to heterosexual and gender norms: the girl rides a horse like a man; she is distracted by the horse from the proper object of desire (a human male); and her

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Taylor performs a less explicit rendition of this scene in the 1944 film version of the novel (*National Velvet*).

sexual interests may turn to women or disappear entirely. As Velvet says, “I don’t ever want children [...] only horses” (McHugh 2011, 80).

Though horse obsession is often “tempered by [a] conclusion with blissful matrimony” (McHugh 91) in girl-horse narratives, the “temporary insanity” (Ashman 159) of the girl’s horse phase has left these texts open to what McHugh calls “psychoanalytic reductions of horse love to girlish perversity” (77). I agree with McHugh that such readings fail to account for the range of desires represented in the girl’s attraction to the horse, which may include the desire for skills mastery, for community with other riders, and, not least, for the “kinesthetic empathy” (McHugh 95) that can be cultivated between horse and rider. This is not to deny the sexual, even bestial, attractions that the horse or horse riding may present for the girl rider (or book reader), which, clearly, take many forms other than the horse as phallic stand-in. Indeed, I further agree with McHugh that “practical claims” about the benefits of horse riding for girls, such as “self-esteem” and “positive body [image]” may obscure the sexual, bodily, or otherwise “perverse” desires that attract girls to horse riding, in stories and in life (93). As I turn my attention to Vilhunen’s documentary, I consider how *Hobbyhorse Revolution* both extends and deviates from the tradition of girl-horse representations examined here.

Film Frames and Riding Rings: Documenting the Hobbyhorse Girls

Vilhunen’s ninety-minute film opens with a scene in which two teenage girls wait for a playground to be emptied of small children so that they can use the space to practice hobbyhorsing. Aisku, one of three girls highlighted in the film, tells her companion, “if a friend goes by who doesn’t know about our hobbyhorses, then we’re screwed.”⁵⁹ Vilhunen thus introduces the central conceit of her documentary—namely, that despite social criticism, the hobbyhorse girls forge bravely ahead with their strange yet inspiring passion. The documentary consists of interviews of individual hobbyhorsers interspersed with scenes that represent hobbyhorsing as a range of activities, including making hobbyhorses from scratch and tending to them through various practices of care. The film shows hobbyhorse gatherings ranging from informal play sessions among small groups of girls, to more focused “training” sessions in which girls coach each other on dressage skills, to formal hobbyhorse competitions attended by dozens or even hundreds of girls, teenagers, and adults. Though the filmmaker is never seen or heard on camera, I argue that the framing imposed by the film—and the adult presence suggested by it—have important implications for how concepts of play and audience are figured in the documentary.

In addition to Aisku, *Hobbyhorse Revolution* features two other teenage girls, Alisa and Elsa. Alisa, often identified as the founder of the hobbyhorse movement in Finland, sports dyed bright red hair and spiked leather accessories, evoking a punk aesthetic that is befitting the counterculture ethos of the hobbyhorse trend. Aisku lives at a foster facility in Helsinki where her mother sent her because her behavior was hard to manage. Elsa, severely bullied at school, describes turning to

⁵⁹ All quotes come from the film’s English subtitles.

hobbyhorses after the death of her (live) therapy horse, Fiona. The documentary clearly suggests that hobbyhorses and the hobbyhorsing community are critical for these girls—and many others—in overcoming trauma and social exclusion. In fact, the film concludes rather tidily with intertitles that point to happy endings for the three featured teens: Alisa is studying bioanalytics, Aisku graduated with good grades and will become a horse groomer, and Elsa will apply to art school. In this respect, the film appears to portray “proper” development with regard to the animal: the girls have “used” the hobbyhorses to grow into successful young adults, with one of them proceeding directly from simulated horse-care to its adult professional equivalent. Reception of the film as a celebration of “girl power,” as one headline puts it (Tanner 2017), also promotes a mainstream reading of the hobbyhorsers as odd but ultimately commendable—and hardly threatening to patriarchal or humanist norms. In various ways, however, Vilhunen’s film portrays—or, perhaps, betrays—the hobbyhorse girls and their practices as queer in the sense that I have been developing throughout this dissertation: as defying normative expectations for sexual, and even species, development.

One way in which Vilhunen’s film evokes the prospect of the hobbyhorse girl’s queerness is in representing a version of the “horse-crazy” girl narrative outlined above. Aside from a few boys at large hobbyhorsing competitions, the documentary depicts hobbyhorsing as an exclusively female pursuit. A number of the girls interviewed describe boys as violent, mean, and silencing; by contrast, the hobbyhorsing community offers a space for female self-expression. As Alisa puts it, “girls can be kind of free [...] there’s no boys [...] saying what they need to do or [...] bossing [them] around” (“Finns Compete” 2017). However, as many hobbyhorse girls acknowledge explicitly, this is not a typical girlhood activity. “The normal things, that normal girls like, they don’t feel like my things,” says one eleven-year-old hobbyhorser (Barry 2019). In the documentary’s standout montage midway through the film, a group of girls at an apparently self-organized hobbyhorse summer camp ride their horses together through forests, fields, and water. Vilhunen portrays the girls in slow motion as they gallop, laugh, dance, and shout in a show of freedom and joy. One girl submerges herself and her horse in a lake—which reads a bit like a baptism or rebirth—while her friends run with their horses along the beach. The montage concludes with a choreographed routine in which the girls trot together in time, the sticks of their hobbyhorses emerging between their legs from behind. The girls of Vilhunen’s film are portrayed as not boy-crazy but horse-crazy; they reject patriarchal constraints and embrace female community; they refuse to outgrow their horsey passions.

Though *Hobbyhorse Revolution* contains no sexually suggestive scenes (à la *National Velvet*), the ecstasy portrayed in some scenes in Vilhunen’s film could be read as replacing the sexual excitement girls are expected to feel towards boys. This includes a scene in which a large group of hobbyhorse girls gathers to count down to the opening of registration for the national hobbyhorse championships online. The girls scream and jump in anticipation; many are nearly brought to tears when their registration is confirmed; they literally fall over each other with excitement (Figure 8). Strikingly, this behavior is reminiscent of girls awaiting the arrival of a boy band on stage, ubiquitous in footage of female fans from the Beatles to the Backstreet

Boys. This performance of female fandom might be understood as a socially acceptable form of “hysterical” female desire, where the explosive desire is contained by the barrier of the stage, as well as by the frame imposed by the camera. In one of several instances in which a subject in the documentary acknowledges the filmmaker’s presence, a girl who has just registered for the championships points her smartphone’s screen at the documentarian’s camera (Figure 8). There is thus a way in which this female performance of excitement is not just an iteration of a familiar scene, but one meant to be captured and reproduced. It is as if the hobbyhorse girls have appropriated—indeed, perverted—this cultural trope for their own purposes and desires.

Figure 8
Girls registering for the National Championships (Vilhunen 2017)



Another important way in which Vilhunen’s film engages with queerness is in its overall framing. In the film’s opening scene discussed above, I noted how Aisku alludes to the fear of being seen with her hobbyhorse by unsympathetic peers, of being found out. It is significant that Vilhunen opens the film in this way, thus centering the problem of how many hobbyhorsers feel they must keep their hobby secret for fear of shame, bullying, and even violence. Whether intended or not, the analogy to being queer and closeted is developed over the course of the film. At one point, Aisku, referring to how her hobbyhorser identity could be easily found out online, says, “I’ve been almost caught many times.” At another point she says “there are two Aiskus”—the hobbyhorsing Aisku, and the Aisku she presents to the rest of the world. The documentary even gives viewers a glimpse into the cupboard where Aisku keeps her hobbyhorses: they literally live in a closet. Though in practical terms this is surely a matter of convenience for the hobbyhorse owner, its symbolic weight in the film is hard to ignore. The analogy to queer identity comes full circle when, in the film’s final scene, Alisa leads a large group of hobbyhorse girls gathered for the national championships on a march through the streets of Helsinki (on their horses, of course). With her megaphone in hand, Alisa shouts, “Hello, Helsinki! We’re hobbyhorseists and we came to greet you!” The girls cheer in reply and they chant, “Respect the hobbyhorses!” The documentary thus ends with a coming out, with a pride parade of sorts (Figure 9).

Figure 9
Hobbyhorsers on parade (Vilhunen 2017)



As with the other child-animal figurations examined in this dissertation, what makes the Finnish hobbyhorse girl a queer child figure in my reading is her failure to adhere to normative development, including with respect to the animal. According to normative developmental logic, the hobbyhorse girls of Vilhunen’s film, who range in age from about ten to twenty years, are too old to be attached to toys meant for children. As one hobbyhorse girl says in the trailer for the film, “[people] say that [hobbyhorsing] is somehow baby-like and embarrassing” (Vilhunen 2016). However, what makes this example stand out from the others in my dissertation is that the hobbyhorse girl may “fail” in one of two ways. She may have loved horses or hobbyhorses from a very young age and fail to “outgrow” the horsey passion—a form of excessive “sideways growth” akin to the persistent horse obsessions described in my discussion of twentieth century girl-horse narratives. Or, she may have never had (or outgrown) an early childhood horse passion, only to turn to hobbyhorses as an adolescent or teenager (or adult). The latter model suggests growing not *sideways* but *backwards*. This “regressive” model of growth, I argue, is particularly queer in the sense that Stockton describes: the teenager or adult who grows backwards may fail to assume adult responsibility, fail to work, fail to be a citizen. Critically, in the case of girls and women, she may fail to become a wife and mother. Taken to its logical extreme, the threat here is to the heteronormative family, to reproduction, and even to humankind. This is precisely the fear articulated by homophobic alarmists and the one roundly refuted in Lee Edelman’s famous polemic, *No Future* (2004). However, the fear surrounding horsey girls is not just that they are “feared lesbians” (Ashman 2017, 164), but that their queerness entails at least a trace of bestiality: theirs is not only a turn away from boys and men, but from human beings.

In one of the most striking scenes in Vilhunen’s film, Aisku coaches Elsa on her riding. After observing Elsa and her hobbyhorse, Trivoli, as they practice a jumping course, Aisku offers feedback. “You need to stop hissing at him,” Aisku says to Elsa, “he gets extra energy from it.” “Yes,” Elsa agrees, slightly out of breath. Aisku continues, “if he overheats and does that, then just don’t jump. Stop and make an extra round.” Aisku then asks Elsa, genuinely curious: “Can I try him?,” referring to

Elsa's hobbyhorse. Elsa agrees and passes Trivoli to Aisku. "Is he smaller than yours?" asks Elsa. "Yes, smaller," replies Aisku. "He's the biggest one in my stable," Elsa says, then adds "it's nice to see your own horse being ridden by someone else." Aisku rides Trivoli in a circle and says, "He's very energetic. Easy to ride faster with it." Elsa looks on with pride as Aisku tells her, "you've done [a] good job in schooling him." What is remarkable about this exchange is that both teenage girls appear to be entirely sincere. There is no trace of irony, cynicism, or pretense as they talk about their hobbyhorses as individual subjects and hobbyhorsing as a serious competition. As I discuss below ("Centaur, Cyborg, Thing"), I do not doubt the girls' position is genuine; however, it is also clearly mediated by the filmmaker.

Though it is impossible to know to what extent the hobbyhorse girls in Vilhunen's documentary are performing "for" the camera/filmmaker, it is critical to note that, whether on camera or off, the success of the hobbyhorsing phenomenon relies on performance and play. As in *Dyrgehagen Hardanger*, the game depends on the players upholding a fiction. In this case, the fiction is not that the hobbyhorses are real horses—at least in Vilhunen's film, the girls do not "voice" their hobbyhorses, for example—but that the hobbyhorses are beings that have reciprocal relationships with their creators/keepers. The fiction also entails a shared set of practices among the hobbyhorse girls—including, as in the scene above, identifying different hobbyhorses' traits and behaviors—that allow participants to co-create and sustain the scene of play. Off-camera, one can imagine that, like the children of *Dyrgehagen Hardanger*, the hobbyhorsers move in and out of the fiction as they negotiate the terms of play. Through the lens of Vilhunen's camera, however, the play is framed and staged; the audience, I argue, is figured to include the admiring filmmaker and a (presumably friendly) adult audience. For part of the scene described above, the filmmaker/camera (I take the latter to be a stand-in for the former), stands at the center as Elsa gallops around her. Though the film does not draw attention to the camera's presence, the filmmaker's central position suggests the action revolves around the privileged adult spectator. This performance of the hobbyhorse fiction is, at least in part, for her eyes and for her pleasure. Though *Hobbyhorse Revolution* clearly has a youth audience in mind—especially girls who will be inspired by the hobbyhorsers' example—the filmmaker's quiet yet undeniable presence hints at the importance of the sympathetic adult observer who is willing, or even longing, to cheer on the fantasy.

Hobbyhorse play and performance is framed in another important way in *Hobbyhorse Revolution*—namely, by the riding rings in which the hobbyhorse girls compete. Though the competitors occasionally perform their dressage skills in real riding rings (i.e., those used for live horse dressage), the riding areas are more often demarcated by tape, ropes, and cones on gymnasium floors. In scenes showing hobbyhorse dressage competitions, which occur throughout Vilhunen's film, the performance is one of athletic ability and finesse within the riding ring, while the audience on-screen watches from the sidelines. The viewer of the documentary thus observes both the athletic performance and the on-screen reception of that performance, which includes girls attentively taking notes, proud parents looking on, and fellow hobbyhorsers filming the action on their smartphones. Thus, within Vilhunen's documentary, the public performance of competition within the riding

ring is distinguished from the “private” performance of hobbyhorse training and play outside of it, as in the scene in which Aisku coaches Elsa, or in the montage described earlier in which the hobbyhorse girls frolic and play. While the riding ring clearly delineates the space of “serious play” reserved for athletic competition, the camera frame is harder to detect: Vilhunen clearly wants her viewers to feel as if they’ve caught a glimpse of the “secret” world of hobbyhorsing.

Beyond the Frame: Online Backlash to the Hobbyhorse Girls

In a YouTube video called “Hobbyhorses—New Trend for Grown Up People in Finland” (“Hobbyhorses—New Trend, n.d.), a computerized male voiceover—the user’s name is Finnish Robotten—gives a summary of the hobbyhorsing trend and then reacts to the image of an adult woman on her hobbyhorse. The voice asks, “What do you think when you see, in the worst case scenario, a forty-year-old adult woman [...] riding a hobbyhorse? What could she [be thinking]? Free her inner child? Deny reality? Because it feels good?”⁶⁰ The voice goes on to say, “what comes to my mind next are, for example, adults who play as a child or babies, or those who are roleplaying as different genders like queer, nonbinary, [or] transgender.” This statement is accompanied by a shot of a chart that displays a wide array of gender identities, which Finnish Robotten clearly includes to make his point that this range of gender expressions is absurd (Figure 10). As if to provide an example of this “absurdity,” the video then shows the image of a fifty-two-year-old father who now identifies as a six-year-old transgender girl. This is followed—abruptly and perplexingly—by a shot in which an unidentified middle-aged white man looks at a computer screen and makes retching sounds as he says, “fuck, look at that”—a scene apparently included to reinforce the user’s disgust. The video ends with the voiceover suggesting that the hobbyhorse trend in Finland—and supposedly related queer phenomena—may well represent the “degeneration of minds in [the] Western world” and that “the world is pretty much ready for Armageddon.” While this last line may contain a trace of irony (the mechanized voice makes it hard to tell), there is no reason to doubt this user’s position is sincere. (Their two other videos on YouTube show similar disdain towards Muslim feminists and black people.) Finnish Robotten’s argument is clear: hobbyhorse girls and their kind may ruin civilization as we know it.

⁶⁰ I have edited quotes from this video for clarity. The voiceover contains many language errors as if the text were translated to English in Google Translate (or similar). I perceive the mechanization of the voiceover as a technique to preserve anonymity.

Figure 10
 Gender chart (“Hobbyhorses—New Trend for Grown Up People in Finland,” n.d.)



Part of what makes this video remarkable is that the first nearly seven minutes of its eight-minute running time are dedicated to providing a general overview of hobbyhorsing in Finland. This overview is neutral in tone and includes clips from the trailer for Vilhunen’s film and a summary of a Finnish news article on the topic. It is as if Finnish Robotten initially expects the viewer to share his sense that the perversity of hobbyhorsing is self-evident. The abrupt shift to a repugnant tone in the final minute of the video seems to suggest that Finnish Robotten suddenly recognizes his audience may not automatically share his view. There is thus a way in which this video models a version of the (presumably) white, straight male suddenly faced with the prospect that his position cannot be taken for granted—indeed, that his position, like that of the hobbyhorser, *is* a position, and an ambivalent one at that. After all, what represents fear and a threat to civilization for Finnish Robotten (and others) represents freedom and possibility for the hobbyhorsers. This contradiction is represented by the concerns implied in the rhetorical questions posed to the adult female hobbyhorser in the video: freeing the inner child, denying reality, feeling good. These are precisely the claims hobbyhorsers make on *behalf* of their hobby—not against it. “I can be as childish as I want to be,” says one hobbyhorse girl (Barry 2019); the hobbyhorse movement “[empowers] women to stay in touch with their dreams and to nurture their inner child,” says a commentator (Olson 2017); one adult woman sees hobbyhorsing as a way “to run away from your boring and maybe exhausting normal life” (Barry 2019). Insofar as “denying reality” entails denouncing the constraints of female adulthood in a patriarchal world, the hobbyhorsers appear to be on board.

Two other YouTube videos explicitly (and degradingly) link hobbyhorsing to queerness, while making the argument that hobbyhorsing is not a “real sport.” In a

video by a user named Cavy (“THIS IS A SPORT!?”, n.d.),⁶¹ a male voiceover set to footage of Finnish hobbyhorse girls describes hobbyhorsing as “just some more bullshit us normal folk have to shield our kids from in the wake of this absolutely mental liberal onslaught of nonsense.” Cavy suggests the only offense worse than allowing a girl to participate in hobbyhorsing would be allowing a boy to do so, which would be akin to teaching the male child, “I can be a girl if I want to.” Cavy says (jokes?) that he would put such a son up for adoption: apparently, for a boy to participate in hobbyhorsing would disqualify him from the heteronormative family. Part of Cavy’s complaint is that hobbyhorsing is not a sport. For Cavy, “jumping around like a four-year-old in the backyard” is regression, not competition; at hobbyhorse competitions, Cavy assumes, “everyone goes home with a medal.”

A similar argument is made in a video by RaleighLink14 (“This Is Hobby Horsing”, 2017). Posing as a hobbyhorse enthusiast in this mockumentary-style video, Raleigh sarcastically affirms the special “bond” she has with her hobbyhorse “life partner,” evoking the lesbianism and bestiality associated with girl-horse relationships. As a self-identified equestrian and animal-rights activist, Raleigh says she takes issue with the hobbyhorsers calling their activity a sport. The logic of both Cavy and Raleigh suggests that the hobbyhorsers’ supposed regression is bound up with the illegitimacy of their athletic activity. For Cavy and Raleigh, “real sports” stem from widely respected traditions, require training and skill to be played, and have well-defined stakes. Though hobbyhorsing has a growing following and its competitions certainly require preparation and skill, it does not fit comfortably into a traditional definition of sport. In this regard, it is useful to compare hobbyhorsing to quidditch, the magical sport from J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* books that has been adapted by fans for play in parks and backyards. What distinguishes quidditch from hobbyhorsing is that the former is played with a healthy dose of irony. As one quidditch player puts it, “you know there’s a sense of ridiculousness to the sport and so no matter how competitive it gets, you have to take a step back and say, ‘O.K., I’m playing quidditch, I’m riding a broom’” (Kilgannon 2013). By contrast, the hobbyhorsers want to be taken seriously. “If someone says we are playing, it strips away everything we made,” says Alisa, “it strips away the reality” (Cills 2019). So, what have the Finnish hobbyhorse girls “made?” What is this “reality?” In what follows, I propose a positive theoretical figuration of the girl on her hobbyhorse.

Centaur, Cyborg, Thing: Figuring the Finnish Girl on Her Hobbyhorse

Here I shift my focus away from Vilhunen’s documentary and toward the broader cultural and theoretical implications of the child-animal figuration consisting of the girl and her hobbyhorse. I will consider this figuration from three angles: the human-horse relation, the prospect of the hobbyhorse as “vibrant matter,” and the Harawayian cyborg.

There is abundant research on human-horse relationships in the field of animal studies. Much of this scholarship points to how, in order to operate or compete effectively, horse and rider must transcend “hegemonic dualisms” that

⁶¹ I accessed this video in 2019. It has since been removed from YouTube.

insist on the autonomy of each (Maurstad, Davis, and Dean 2015, 107). The mythical figure of the centaur is often invoked in this research to characterize the closeness between horse and rider that is both necessary for success and often a source of pleasure and connection for human and animal. Maurstad, Davis and Dean define “centaurability” as “the embodied feeling of being one and acting as one” (2015, 108). Horse and rider are best understood “not as subject and object but as two intra-active, agentive individuals” (108). Unsurprisingly, scholars working on horses and riders often invoke Donna Haraway’s *Companion Species Manifesto*, in which she elaborates her concept of “significant otherness,” which describes symbiotic, nonhierarchical relationships between humans and nonhuman others (2016b). The scene from Vilhunen’s film in which Aisku coaches Elsa is one of many in which the centaurability of the girl and her hobbyhorse is on display. This symbiosis between horse and rider is also apparent in the film’s various scenes of hobbyhorse competitions, where a girl and her horse are judged and awarded as a team. “We were in a competition last week,” Elsa says of herself and Trivoli. “The horse and rider played beautifully together,” says one judge of a strong performance at a competition shown in the film. Like “real” dressage, hobbyhorse competitions are built around the premise of total coordination between horse and rider.

But of course, the hobbyhorse is not a real animal. This is at the core of Cavy’s and Raleigh’s critiques: How can the hobbyhorse girls claim the premises of sport, skill, and relationship when their horses are not real? Importantly, the hobbyhorse girls are not confused on this point, as one Finnish teenage hobbyhorser, Taija, makes clear in a filmed interview (“Finns Compete” 2017). In describing how outsiders sometimes react to the “bizarre” hobby, she says, “they think that we think that the horse is alive, which we do not. We understand that it’s... ‘dead,’ made of fabric and stuffing and all that” (“Finns Compete” 2017). Taija puts air quotes around the word “dead” in describing the hobbyhorse, and her friends giggle at her diction: clearly, it is not the best descriptor. I do not believe that Taija’s difficulty in coming up with the right word is a problem of translation. She speaks English fluently. Rather, the trouble has to do with the ontological status of the hobbyhorse: what kind of subject is a not-live horse? Despite knowing their hobbyhorses are not alive, many hobbyhorse girls treat their “fabric and stuffing” like a real animal: they feed and water their hobbyhorses, they keep riding diaries and stable their horses in closets and sheds, they pet and groom their horses and tend to their horses’ health.⁶² The age-based explanation alone (they’re too old!) does not go far enough in accounting for what makes hobbyhorsing strange. It is rather the combination of age (too old), gender (non-normative girlhood), and commitment (time, knowledge, skill, resources) to the not-real animal that makes this hobby intriguing to some and disturbing to others.

When the girls in the interview mentioned above giggled at the notion of the hobbyhorse as “dead,” I believe it is because they do not experience their hobbyhorses as dead at all. Jane Bennett’s work offers a productive mode for thinking about the life status of the hobbyhorse (2010). For Bennett, “matter”—that

⁶² At one hobbyhorse competition, “a veterinarian lectured girls on hobbyhorse vaccination schedules, saying ‘check that the eyes are clear and there is no nasal discharge’” (Barry 2019).

is, the stuff that we typically think of as not alive (“a dead rat, a plastic cup, a spool of thread” (3)), is, in fact, “vibrant.” It is human hubris, says Bennett, and the insistence on a hierarchy that places man at the top, that keeps us from understanding this fundamental truth. Bennett convincingly argues that nonhuman “actants”—from stones and chairs to the electrical power grid—“[have] efficacy, can *do* things, [have] sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events” (viii). Three of her concepts are particularly useful for my argument. The first is “thing-power.” Bennett argues that humans should stop thinking of cars, flowers, and tin cans as “objects,” which only exist relative to the human’s position as “subject,” and start understanding them as “things,” which are “vivid entities” (5) that exist regardless of human context. Like all things, hobbyhorses have thing-power: they act on their human partners; they hiss, kick back, resist, and cooperate. Bennett further claims that humans are not so different from things. People are composed of the same “vital materials” that make up rocks, hobbyhorses, and all the rest; “our powers,” writes Bennett, “are thing-power” (11). This idea helps to deconstruct a human-thing binary; it also relates to Bennett’s claim that “an actant never really acts alone” (21). This leads to the second of Bennett’s concepts important for me, that of “assemblage”—borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari, and similar to Hayles’s “amalgam” (2009), which I drew on in discussing the Hattifatteners—by which Bennett means to suggest a “heterogeneous” figuration (23), a “confederation of human and nonhuman elements” (21) that is nonhierarchical and whose various parts enhance the power of the whole. I claim the girl on her hobbyhorse is one such assemblage.

Bennett admits that thinking about humans and things in this way requires an intellectual leap, especially because it entails the problem of humans anthropomorphizing matter, which may undercut the effort to challenge the supposed primacy of human thinking. But I agree with Bennett that “we need to cultivate a little anthropomorphism” in order to grasp that “human agency has some echoes in nonhuman nature” (xvi), that horses—and hobbyhorses—may be on par with people as beings. Bennett further suggests—and this is the third concept of interest to me—that appreciating thing-power might require “moments of methodological naiveté” and the “postponement” of critique (17). She writes, “this delay might render manifest a subsistent world of nonhuman vitality” (17). Bennett’s invocation of the notions of “postponement” and “delay,” as well as the “naiveté” and, elsewhere, the “childhood sense” (20) she suggests are needed to grasp her theoretical approach, resonate with my project. The hobbyhorse girls are not dumb or delusional, nor are they fantasists. Rather, they act like “vibrant materialists,” the term Bennett uses for herself and practitioners (wittingly or not) of her approach.

I finally want to suggest that Donna Haraway’s cyborg is a fitting figuration for the girl on her hobbyhorse. In her seminal essay, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway masterfully weaves together ideas about socialism and feminism, technology and reproduction, sex and animals (2016a). These ideas are intentionally entangled, modeling the paradoxical form of the cyborg she means to convey: complex but not complete, neither part nor whole. I will consider how the Harawayian cyborg illuminates the figuration of the girl and her hobbyhorse in three ways: the physical,

the sexual, and the political. Part of the point of Haraway's cyborg is that it is a figure that takes countless forms; there is no ur-example, no archetype. In any case, Haraway's cyborg is "simultaneously animal and machine" (6), "a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (5), and a figure in which "one is too few and two are too many" (60). The last is a claim I made about Nils Holgersson on gooseback in the first chapter of this dissertation. There I argued that Nils-plus-goose is the cyborg that constructs the Swedish nation in Selma Lagerlöf's text. It is not just that Nils and the goose come together or work as a team but that their bodies and purposes become entangled. The same might be said of the Finnish girl and her hobbyhorse. The physicality of that entanglement can be explained in part by the cybernetic concept of the feedback loop, which I earlier argued is a crucial aspect of Hattifattener subjectivity in Tove Jansson's Moomin series. As with a "real" horse and rider, the hobbyhorse and its rider can be understood as engaged in a system of giving and receiving information. That information is mediated through their bodies, as well as through the technology of bit and bridle. Effective feedback loops result in a level of coordination that blurs the lines between one body and another. This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in scenes of competition in Vilhunen's film, in which girl and hobbyhorse gallop, trot, and canter in addition to performing jumps and choreographed routines. Not only does the girl ride the hobbyhorse, but her legs become an extension of its body, performing the strength, speed, and grace (pointed "hoofs" and all) of a well-trained dressage horse.

The image in Vilhunen's documentary that most obviously evokes a sexual connotation—shown many times, at a distance and in close-up—is the stick of the hobbyhorse between a girl's legs. One might read this image in the tradition of fear surrounding girls and horses: the girl has replaced the proper object of desire with a phallic stand-in. A feminist reading might say the hobbyhorse girl has *chosen* what to put between her legs—and it is *not* a phallus, thank you very much. Neither reading seems adequate to me. Though as I have suggested, *Hobbyhorse Revolution* contains scenes that hint at a kind of ecstasy in hobbyhorsing, the film does not suggest that girls get sexual pleasure from propping a stick horse between their legs. It is, of course, entirely possible that some hobbyhorse girls do experience such pleasure, on camera or off. However, the more important point made by the film is one that fits with Haraway's claims about the sexuality of the cyborg: that pleasure can be indeterminate. The cyborg, for Haraway, is interested in "the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment" (2016a, 66). It is this brand of pleasure, I argue, that is present in the scenes of excitement in Vilhunen's film, such as the scene in which the girls register for the national hobbyhorse championships or the montage in which the girls frolic, laugh, and dance with each other and their hobbyhorses. It would be a misreading to suggest there is no sexual energy in these scenes; it would be equally inaccurate to say these scenes betray some repressed desire: phallic or lesbian. Rather, the sexual energy in these scenes is indirect, experienced towards and through a network of girls and hobbyhorses. This is a cyborg community. It stands in opposition to the "organic family" (9), to reproduction, and to "totalizing" mythologies—all of which Haraway associates with hetero, human, and patriarchal norms (67). Haraway's cyborg does not care about "rebirth" but values "regeneration" (67). The latter Haraway identifies with

practices of retelling (55). The hobbyhorse girls of Vilhunen's film operate in this spirit. They do not give birth to their hobbyhorses but make them out of vibrant matter. They are retelling not only their personal stories, including overcoming trauma, but bigger myths as well: they are retelling the myth of the centaur, they are rewriting the girl-horse canon.

This can be understood as a political project. The title of Vilhunen's film clearly evokes the political (*Revolution*) and Alisa explicitly links hobbyhorsing with feminism, stating, "hobbyhorsing has a feministic agenda" ("Finns Compete" 2017). The hobbyhorse girls have been described as having a "systerskap" (Uggeldahl 2017) [sisterhood] and a "stark inre demokrati" (Vilhunen quoted in "Käpphästar" 2017) [strong internal democracy]. "Revolution" and "feminism" are not necessarily cyborg politics: Haraway is skeptical of politics that aim to universalize, as they have a tendency to erase differences and to silence those in the minority. A cyborg politics, according to Haraway, is one that is multiple, polyvocal, and "frayed" (60); it embraces difference among its constituents but finds enough in common to effect change. This is a utopian vision, and admittedly so in Haraway's Manifesto. Haraway writes, "the cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence" (9). This description, and cyborg politics more broadly, I argue, offer a fine characterization of the hobbyhorse girls as they are represented in Vilhunen's film. Like the cyborg of Haraway's Manifesto, the hobbyhorse girls dream of a "world without gender" (67)—or at least one without the oppression of the gender binary. Like the cyborg, the hobbyhorse girls are "wary of holism, but needy for connection" (9). They long to connect—socially, bodily, politically—with new kinds of subjects, new kinds of community. Perhaps most importantly, the hobbyhorse girls "have a natural feel for united-front politics, but without the vanguard party" (9). It is hard to imagine a better demonstration of this tenet than the hobbyhorse march through the streets of Helsinki that concludes Vilhunen's film. Instead of hoisting sticks with signs, the marchers straddle sticks with horseheads, which bob along to no particular rhythm. The marchers' only demand is to be recognized. Vilhunen's film ends with a still shot of Alisa leading the hobbyhorsers in a chant of, "respect to the hobbyhorses!" The shot is accompanied by the non-diegetic sounds of galloping hooves and a horse's neigh—a reminder that hobbyhorse politics always contains a trace of the animal.

Un-Queering the Hobbyhorse: Finnish Hobbyhorsers Go Mainstream

Finland is no stranger to weird sports (Keh 2017). In a country where wife-carrying, cell phone-throwing, and competitive air-guitar are celebrated pastimes, perhaps hobbyhorsing is just another odd Finnish amusement, another point for its quirky Nordic profile. In this section I have tried to argue that this is not the case—that, rather, the Finnish girl and her hobbyhorse, especially as they are represented in Vilhunen's documentary, constitute a remarkable and queer child-animal figuration that rejects boundaries of age and species. However, as hobbyhorsing becomes increasingly popular—Finnish hobbyhorsing now boasts 10,000 participants, with popularity growing in Sweden, Norway, and the United States ("Käpphästar" 2017)—it shows signs of losing its grass roots, of being mainstreamed, of becoming

a “real sport.” In fact, the official tourism website of Finland (thisisFinland) has various links promoting hobbyhorsing—or, more accurately, promoting Finland via the popularity of this homegrown trend. One of the website’s pages shows a girl giving Prince William two hobbyhorses made by Alisa (thisisFinland 2017b). Another links to a “Hobbyhorse Toolbox” (thehobbyhorse.fi, n.d.), a site that gives an overview of hobbyhorsing in Finland, including a collection of professionally made and branded videos. Indeed, the Finnish tourism website is unabashed about appropriating hobbyhorsing for its purposes, explicitly linking the hobby with aspirational Finnish values: “The hobbyhorse phenomenon involves imagination, innovation and independent thinking – all qualities that are a source of pride in Finland and are highly valued in today’s world” (thisisFinland 2017c).

One video on Finland’s tourism website is particularly interesting for how it mainstreams—or “un-queers”—the hobbyhorsing phenomenon. The ninety-second video is called “Are You Brave Enough to Ride?” and is directed by Finnish filmmaker Viivi Huuska (2017). The video is featured on a page that also highlights Finnish designers inspired by the hobbyhorsers, whose work was sold at a popup webshop (thisisFinland 2017a). “Are You Brave Enough to Ride?” opens with a shot of bored teenagers picking at French fries and blowing bubbles into milkshakes in a poorly lit diner. A couple of the girls in the video are recognizable from Vilhunen’s film; others have been cast just for this video, including an Asian teenage boy who would have seemed out of place in *Hobbyhorse Revolution* due to both his race and his gender. Suddenly, Alisa (featured here yet again) slams closed a textbook; a glass of soda is smashed on the floor. The teenagers stand up, grab their hobbyhorses, and stomp their way into the diner’s kitchen where they find a door framed in pink neon lights. As they approach the door, up-tempo classical music replaces the dull sound of buzzing light bulbs, and the awe-struck teenagers pass through. On the other side of this door the teenagers find a large room lit in red and blue tones and adorned with lava lamps, sheer drapes, and potted plants. A party ensues. The second half of Huuska’s video alternates slow-motion shots of the teenagers frolicking on their hobbyhorses with close-ups of their faces, while phrases in various languages flash across the screen: “hobbyhorse power,” “adiestramiento” (Spanish for “training”), and “passer les obstacles” (French for “overcome obstacles”), to name a few.

The sense of inclusiveness evoked in the video by both the racially and gender-diverse cast and by the incorporation of various languages is surely fitting with the spirit of equity and community associated with Finnish hobbyhorsing in Vilhunen’s documentary and elsewhere. As a promotional tool of the state, however, Huuska’s video invites critique. “Are You Brave Enough to Ride?” generalizes and universalizes Finnish hobbyhorsing (a move counter to the Harawayian cyborg ethos) in two key ways. First, it attempts to reduce Finnish hobbyhorsing to buzzwords that are easily translated. This language is akin to keywords—power, confidence, courage, creativity—that are repeated throughout the webpages related to hobbyhorsing on Finland’s tourism site. The second way in which this video generalizes Finnish hobbyhorsing relative to the nuanced treatment the hobby receives in Vilhunen’s film is with regard to its portrayal of teenagers. Though Huuska’s video seems self-aware about its invocation of a familiar scene—i.e., bored teenagers at a diner—it simultaneously leans into stereotypes about angst-filled

adolescents: they long to escape adult spaces, they want to party, they do strange and interesting things when untended. This generic picture of teen angst is echoed elsewhere on thisisFinland. “Not all grown-ups get it,” says one hobbyhorse-related page (thisisFinland 2017a). “No grown-ups necessary,” boasts another (thisisFinland 2017c).

It is true that Finnish hobbyhorsing and its attendant realms of organized activity and material culture are largely facilitated and produced by youth. This is a remarkable fact and one that offers an important counterargument to claims by Finnish Robotten, Cavy, and others that the Finnish hobbyhorsers are immature. However, the suggestions in Huuska’s video and on thisisFinland that the hobbyhorsers suffer from typical teenage angst and that they reject adult guidance or involvement are not accurate according to Vilhunen’s film or news reporting on the subject. A major claim of Vilhunen’s documentary, and one that I have elaborated through the lens of queerness, is that the hobbyhorse girls are *not* typical teenagers: they reject a number of social and gender norms, and, for them, bullies (especially male peers)—not adults—appear to be the problem. Indeed, in *Hobbyhorse Revolution*, caring adults—both parents and those who help facilitate and judge at hobbyhorse competitions—are portrayed as important allies and sources of support to the hobbyhorsers. The welcome participation of adult hobbyhorsers further refutes the notion promoted in the Finnish tourist materials that hobbyhorsing is a space of youth rebellion and “adults not allowed.”

The hobbyhorse trend in Finland is reminiscent of another Scandinavian sensation—namely, Pippi Longstocking (*Pippi Långstrump*). As cultural phenomena, hobbyhorsing and Pippi have much in common: both are seen as representations of girl power, both have been appropriated by the state as symbols of national identity, and both have become sources of inspiration for adult women. Astrid Lindgren’s Pippi, perhaps the most famous figure of children’s literature in the world, is independent, rule-breaking, and fun-loving. She lives alone, does not go to school, and—as mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation—is so strong that she can lift her horse above her head. The official website for Sweden calls Pippi a “rebel role model” (Sweden.se 2018). The site celebrates her as a liberatory force for children and women. *Pippi Power*, a self-help book aimed at adult female readers, encourages women to reject perfectionism and social constraints and instead ask, “What would Pippi do?” (Jørgensen 2008). Though the Pippi of Lindgren’s books rejects the authority of the state—in one instance, literally throwing out the policemen who try to make her the state’s ward (Lindgren 1945)—the figure of Pippi that has circulated broadly is a relatively tame symbol of the strong girl, of the autonomous child, and of playfully pushing boundaries.

And yet, this relatively tame figure is only possible because the Pippi archetype has been so fully embraced by Swedish culture and by a Western standard of girlhood more broadly. In fact, the official Swedish website suggests that the Pippi model for girls has become so ubiquitous as to possibly be limiting: “surely not everyone can be as courageous, tough and entertaining as Pippi?” (Sweden.se 2018), the site suggests. Though the rhetorical question could be read as an urge to rein in Pippi-like behavior and produce more girls like Annika, Pippi’s conventional counterpart in Lindgren’s books, the more important point is this: it is only from a

historical perspective in which the Pippi model is so broadly accepted and so well incorporated into the culture that such a question can even be asked. Might there be a day when Finns or others pose the question: “surely not everyone can be as brave, skilled, and entrepreneurial as the hobbyhorse girls?” In the anti-developmental and posthumanist senses in which I have developed the concept throughout this dissertation, Pippi is a queer child: her family history is murky, she makes her home with a monkey and a horse, and she is determined not to grow up. This child has been institutionalized by Swedish culture and by the Swedish state. Such institutionalization can have the effect of flattening or erasing the most prickly, problematic, or queer aspects of a figure. But this mainstreaming also centers the queer child in ways unmatched by almost any other place in the world. In the conclusion to the dissertation, I consider the case of queer childhood in Scandinavia and the value in protecting it.

Conclusion: Testing the Limits of Childhood in Jansson, Fosse, and Vilhunen

In this chapter I have argued that Tove Jansson’s Moomin series explodes the standard categories for animals in children’s literature, and that her beloved Moomin characters, so often understood as stand-ins for humans, are queer species. I also locate queerness in Jon Fosse’s *Dyrehagen Hardanger*, where I argue the child characters move in and out of animal drag, destabilizing categories of animal and human on the one hand and of fiction and reality on the other. With Vilhunen’s recent documentary, I suggest that the “animal” in the child-animal figuration is not “alive” in a humanist sense but “vibrant” in a posthumanist one. I figure the Finnish girl on her hobbyhorse as the queerest example in this dissertation, as she represents a version of growth that may extend not only *sideways*, per Stockton, but *backwards*—a regressive model that may undo the premise of development altogether. Together, these examples suggest the Nordic queer child figure is alive and well in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and that this figure is bound up with animals and animality. Moreover, these examples suggest the Nordic queer child-animal figuration is invested in exploring and expanding the limits of fiction, pretend, and play. Put another way, the texts by Jansson and Fosse and the film by Vilhunen are interested in testing the limits of childhood itself. In the conclusion to this dissertation, I take up the question of the form and limits of Scandinavian childhood by challenging the common notion of the competent child with the conception of the Nordic queer child that I have developed in this project.

CONCLUSION
“Beyond the Competent Child”:
The Nordic Queer Child and the Child-Animal Figuration

I begin this conclusion by invoking the title of the scholarly anthology cited in this dissertation’s introduction: *Beyond the Competent Child* (Brembeck, Johansson, and Kampmann 2004). Throughout that text, various scholars trouble the notion of the Nordic competent child and the anthology concludes by suggesting that a model of “becoming” is best for understanding both the child and the adult (Wenzer 2004). This model takes the competent child—a state of “being”—to be too fixed and suggests that childhood and adulthood are both ever-evolving processes. This seems reasonable enough, especially given the countless ways in which individual children and adults defy the categories to which they are assigned based on age or “development.” And, it is in keeping with a trend in childhood studies, exemplified by Marah Gubar’s “kinship” model (2016), in which scholars argue that children and adults are more similar than they are different and that emphasizing the differences between the two groups runs the risk of damaging members of both. However, as I stated in the introduction, and as I have aimed to show throughout this dissertation, I take childhood to be a particular and separate category from that of adulthood, and one that can be understood in terms of queerness—specifically, queerness as framed by Stockton’s notions of the child queered by Freud (especially in the case of Hoel) and the child queered by innocence. Moreover, I have aimed to show that the Nordic child figure is a particularly compelling inflection of the queer child, including—critically—in its intersection with the animal. In this conclusion, I will suggest that the Nordic countries have managed to respect and even cultivate queer childhood better than most, and I want to propose that the queerness of childhood is of value and ought to be protected.

The Competent Child v. the Queer Child: Reflecting on Examples

Though the emphasis of this project has been on the figuration that I call the Nordic queer child, the texts considered here also contain, or sometimes allude to, the Nordic competent child figure. It is worth reflecting on a few examples in making a distinction between the two. “Lille Alvilde” is a fine case. Hansen’s text is clearly invested in representing Norwegian children as competent, especially with regard to spending time in Nature. The author’s adjectives for the child characters make this clear: the “leader” Frits, the “merry” Luise, the “mischievous” Thora, the “serious” Jørgen, the “unruly” Anton (Hansen [1829] 1974, 12). These descriptors suggest a rather remarkable group of children—energetic, adventurous, even rebellious—and affirm Åse Marie Ommundsen’s claim that the Nordic competent child long predates the twentieth century (2018). However, while Ommundsen reads Alvilde as a competent child, I read Alvilde as an unusual figure and an example of Stockton’s child queered by innocence, as illustrated by her strange encounter and interspecies kinship with the bear. When Alvilde’s siblings finally find her in the woods—the bear places its paw on Alvilde’s shoulder one last time before they arrive—they rush her home to safety (Hansen 16). I read the relief at

the end of Hansen's text as that of Alvilde's sibling and her parents, but not necessarily her own: while her siblings and parents cry and pray, Alvilde is conspicuously silent. Alvilde's siblings have acted responsibly and independently in accordance with a model of the Scandinavian competent child. Alvilde, however, is something else. As Hansen's text says, she is "Dagens Dronning" (12) [The Queen of the Day]. This is "beyond the competent child" indeed: juxtaposing the young child and the royal adult in one figure is a beautiful illustration of Stockton's "normative strangeness."

In *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, I argued that Nils Holgersson is a queer child figure for how the threat to his heterosexual development is bound up with his altered species and for how his integration with the animal other troubles the certainty of his becoming a human and citizen. By contrast, Nils's child counterparts in Lagerlöf's text, the siblings Åsa and Mats, are competent children: they traverse the Swedish nation alone by foot and are the source of community education and social uplift along the way.⁶³ However, they do not contend with high stakes regarding species status and human development, as Nils does. In Fosses' text, too, some children might be understood as queerer than others. Specifically, Jon, who is deeply invested in the animal drag at Hardanger Zoo, might be read as more queer, while his friend Helge, who at regular intervals questions the game and is less committed to sustaining the fiction, might be read as more competent. It is also possible to imagine kids who self-organize around "real" sports as the competent counterpart to the queer example of the Finnish hobbyhorse girls. Finally, the Pippi books present a useful comparison between the queer child and the competent child. While I have argued that Pippi should be understood as a queer child, her neighbors, the siblings Tommy and Annika, are competent children: they are capable and curious, they play and roam with almost no adult oversight, and they draw on their moral sensibility without being rigid. However, while they show little hesitation about joining Pippi on her wild and sometimes dangerous adventures, they return home not to a horse and a monkey but to human, middle-class parents, and they seem mostly content to do so. As these examples importantly suggest, the competent child is not a rule-follower, an adult-in-waiting. Rather, the competent child comes in contact with the queer child because she is curious, independent, and relatively unsupervised.

Beyond the Competent Child: The Queer Child

The brief review above and my analysis throughout this dissertation suggest that the common notion of the Nordic competent child does not go far enough in accounting for the particularity of the figure of the Nordic child. Queerness sheds light on something that competence does not: the child is not just capable, but strange. Capability, or competence, goes some way in explaining the child's strangeness—that is, if the child is meant to be innocent, then competence might bring the child uncomfortably close to the adult position (Stockton's "normative strangeness"), rendering her queer. Thus, the competent child model could be

⁶³ Among their good deeds, Åsa and Mats educate fellow Swedes about how to prevent tuberculosis.

understood as containing a tacit queerness. What I have argued makes the child more decidedly queer—and, to be clear, the queer child is very often also a competent child—is her engagement with the question of development, which is often bound up with the question of the animal. And though my examples are limited in scope, I believe they suggest that the queer child is a prevalent and important figure in Scandinavian literature and culture. Here I think it is again important to acknowledge that the child figures examined in this project are queer in the sense of Stockton's two latter categories: the child queered by Freud, who shows aggressive drives, and the child queered by innocence, whose queerness emerges in the irreconcilable distance between her position and that of the heterosexual adult. Importantly, these two versions of the queer child often overlap in one figure, and one or both of these versions of the queer child may overlap with what Stockton calls the "ghostly gay child," or what I refer to as the LGBTQ child. My lack of attention to the LGBTQ child is arguably a gap in this project, and it is one that deserves attention, especially given the exciting scholarship at the intersection of queer studies and animal studies on the one hand,⁶⁴ and the fact that queer theory stands to be enriched by further engagement with childhood studies and children's literature on the other (Kidd 2011). That being said, this dissertation's attention to the queerness of the presumably non-LGBTQ Scandinavian child—the child that, as Stockton puts in heavy quotes, will, "if all goes well," grow up to be straight (27)—is productive in that it shows how the concept of the competent child may not do sufficient work in explaining what makes the Nordic child a fascinating figure.

If, as I claim, childhood in Scandinavia is queerer than in other places, why might this be? In the introduction to the dissertation, I pointed to a variety of political and cultural realities in the Nordic countries that I would suggest promote not just children's rights, protections, and competence, but also the child's queerness. For example, I understand generous parental leave and universal education and health care as policies that make childhood less contingent. That is, where children, at a broad scale, are less likely to experience the potentially devastating effects of poverty, illness, and oppression, the particularities of childhood—whether understood in terms of innocence, competence, or queerness—have more room to breathe. It is also significant that the institutionalized period of "childhood delay" in the Nordic countries is often longer than it is elsewhere, thus potentially allowing for greater "sideways growth" (Stockton). For example, students in the Scandinavian countries typically graduate from high school at the age of nineteen or twenty and taking a "gap year" is not uncommon; social factors such as marrying later in life and having fewer children may contribute to the formation of "semiautonomous and self-regulating youth [cultures]" (Berggren and Trägård 2010, 17) in Scandinavia; and in Norway, it was not until 1997 that the age for starting formal schooling was reduced from seven years to six—a reform that continues to meet with fierce criticism for limiting the portion of childhood dedicated to free play (Jonassen 2017). Additionally, as my examples throughout the dissertation also indicate, (relatively) unsupervised

⁶⁴ See Chen and Luciano (2015), Hayward and Weinstein (2015), and Giffney and Hird (2016).

children's play is widely valued in Scandinavia. International perceptions of the Scandinavian outdoor kindergarten—where children sleep outside, climb trees, and use sharp knives—help to illuminate the particularity of this Nordic institution.⁶⁵

Of course, the Scandinavian countries are not utopias, and children there experience poverty, hunger, abuse, and neglect as they do everywhere else in the world. Children of color in the Nordic countries are particularly vulnerable: many white Scandinavians refuse to acknowledge that racism in Scandinavia even exists, making its effects all the more pernicious (Lundström and Teitelbaum 2017, 153-4). And, the rise of neoliberal policies in Scandinavia over the last few decades, as well as the more recent rise of far right politics, stands to threaten the version of Scandinavian childhood that I have described. Still, I think it is fair to say that childhood is both better protected and less intensely regulated by adults in Scandinavia than it is in most other western countries, not least the United States. I would submit that it is this combination of protection on the one hand and relative lack of intervention on the other—the approach espoused by Ellen Key at the turn of the twentieth century—that helps to cultivate the queerness of childhood. Additionally, as this dissertation's first and third chapters suggest, children's literature—which not only reflects but also produces ideas about childhood—may well be an important source for promoting the queerness of childhood in Scandinavia.

Protecting the Queerness of Childhood: What is at Stake?

The dominant logic regarding childhood suggests that what ought to be protected about the child is her innocence. As James R. Kincaid and others have shown, the drive to protect the child's presumed innocence has altogether more to do with adult needs and desires than it does with what children want or need (Kincaid 1992). I have suggested that Scandinavia generally does a better job in this regard by (often) respecting the child's competence and autonomy and, further, by promoting and protecting the queerness of childhood. Various factors in the Nordic countries, I have argued, enable this possibility. But, why does this matter? What makes the queerness of childhood worth protecting? Fundamentally, to protect the child's queerness is to object to restrictive models of normative development. I want to suggest that this objection is important for children and childhood on the one hand, and for adults and the creation of art on the other.

Though mine is not a project focused on the rights or the psychology of children, I have throughout this dissertation suggested that promoting the queerness of childhood—whether through structural and cultural means or through representational means—is valuable for children. Critically, the innocent child is not supposed to be self-aware, nor perhaps even aware that the category of childhood exists. Permitting for queer childhood, by contrast, allows the child to understand childhood as a phase, as a construct, as the high-stakes category that it is. It allows the child to recognize “normative strangeness” as a condition of her being. This

⁶⁵ “Kids Gone Wild” (2016) shows the combination of admiration and concern common in American, British, and Australian reporting on the Scandinavian outdoor kindergarten.

matters because it can be empowering: it may allow the child to (at least partially) escape the confines of the expectations of innocence. Also, protecting the queerness of childhood may help the child experience childhood as existentially, philosophically, and aesthetically interesting.

Protecting the queerness of childhood also matters for adults. For one thing, there may well be something liberating for adults in not having to maintain the fantasy of the child's innocence while also not having to imagine the child as a peer or peer-in-the-making. Indeed, one of the contributions of this dissertation is situating the child as neither innocent nor as a natural fit for models of "kinship" or "becoming." Rather, this dissertation suggests that, like the animal, the child—for the (normative) adult—is remarkable, uncanny, and strange. Understanding the child as queer allows the adult to turn to the child—the external child, or the child "within"—in order to object to the confines of normative development. In everyday life, adults often do this by looking to their own children as models for discovering the world with fresh eyes, for making once again strange that which has become all too familiar. More interestingly, some adults are able to tap into the queerness of their own childhoods, writing these queer childhoods into existence, as I argue Sigurd Hoel, Tarjei Vesaas, and Cora Sandel do. These authors model a way in which the adult might imagine her way back to pivotal points in the past, where things might have gone more "sideways." Making space for the sideways child is an indirect way to make space for the sideways adult. Queer childhood, this dissertation argues, can help to cultivate the writer or artist, while certain writers and artists show a special capacity to represent queer childhoods. Their work is important, not least for how it may encourage children and adults to test the bounds of development, subjectivity, and species.

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