

## Introduction

Children's literature does not simply appear out of nowhere. Children's books are not only products of their time, but also products of the literary institutions of their time. These literary institutions have a gatekeeping function, checking and erasing some currents and ideas while reinforcing others. This year's two themes, Nordic children's crime fiction and literary institutions, are truly two sides of the same coin. Children's crime fiction reaps the benefits of the immense success of crime fiction, and its paratexts reveal a market strategic way of thinking closely linked to the infrastructure of literary production. These questions, how literary institutions are shaped and why as well as how a genre gains ground, are central to *Barnboken's* special issue on "Nordic Noir in Children's Crime: from Sventon to Simukka" and "The Institutions that Shape Children's Literature".

The success of Nordic Noir has hardly gone unnoticed. How is the genre manifested in Swedish and Norwegian middle readers books? That is the topic of Lykke Guanio-Uluru's article on Martin Widmark and Helena Willis' *LasseMaja* series (2002-16) and Jørn Lier Horst and Jørgen Sandnes' Norwegian children's books about *Detektivbyrå nr 2* (2013-16). By examining paratexts and mapping the typology of crime fiction, the analysis reveals diametrically different approaches. Widmark and Willis create a carnivalesque, subversive universe where children are in charge instead of the wacky adults surrounding them, while Lier Horst and Sandnes adopt a more didactic tone and keep the real-world power structure between children and adults intact. In this way, Guanio-Uluru shows there is room for more than one ideological angle in children's crime fiction.

The international success of Nordic Noir has its equivalent in Nils-Olof Franzén's *Agaton Sax* series (1955-78) that was translated for

a British audience. Charlotte Berry revisits Agaton Sax by examining the books' migration into the English language. In her article, Berry reveals interesting publicist conventions. The publishing house invested a great deal in the series both financially and creatively, and the author was involved in self-translation projects that are believed to have contributed to the success.

Today, Swedish queens of crime fiction such as Åsa Larsson, Anna Jansson and Kristina Ohlsson also write for a young audience. By analysing these authorships, Sara Kärholm considers the intersection between crime and mystery fiction for children and for adults. She notes that when it comes to the marketing of books such as the Pax series, where both events and literary tourism are used, they appeal to the adult middleman conveying the books to the child rather than to the child. The paratexts of these books reveal the strategy to make use of the established brand, in this case the authorship, to reach a child audience.

The fact that all three articles on crime fiction for children address literary production cycles is hardly surprising; crime fiction for children is a particularly clear example of how today's popular literature is circulated. Because of its marginal position within children's literature research, there is still little research on literary institutions in relation to children's books. The great changes having taken place in literary institutions call for an examination of them in order to understand the development of children's literature within the structures where it is created.

The key role of literary institutions is emphasized in Shih-Wen Sue Chen's article on how Protestant missionary presses influenced the development of children's literature in late nineteenth and early twentieth century China. The introduction of new printing techniques and the subsequent increase in illustrations are presented as important factors in terms of shaping the Chinese children's books market during this period. It is clear that the development of children's books is closely linked to the technology available, not to mention the financial framework of book production.

Anna Karlskov Skyggebjerg's analysis of the Danish phenomenon author schools for children draws attention to an institution undergoing a transformation; children's writing. Skyggebjerg suggests that the great interest in creative writing, with guidance from professional writers and other agents, can lead to changes in school writing practices. By using the term *praksis-gemenskap* ("practice-community"), she underlines the collaborative possibilities of the literary institution.

Literary institutions not only offer the possibility for fiction to investigate ethical questions, but also to re-define limits. This year's issue includes several examples of writers and illustrators who can be seen as driving forces within their fields. Australian ALMA laureate Sonya Hartnett's authorship is characterized by strong positionings. Analysing the novel *The Midnight Zoo* (2010) from an eco-philosophical perspective, Aliona Yarova discusses the twofold role of the animals in the novel; in a metaphorical sense representing humans while at the same time raising ethical questions about our treatment of real-life animals. Through the depiction of the animals, the story alludes to the Nazi extermination of the Roma during World War II and Yarova's analysis points to the powerful way in which this trope helps breaking down binary oppositions to give room for empathy and ethics.

Gustaf Tenggren is known for his work for the Disney conglomerate. JoAnn Conrad examines how his style as an illustrator is expressed in fairy tales and advertisements. Modernism, with its abstract forms and bright colours appealing to emotions reached a middle-class audience through Tenggren's illustrations. The central question in Conrad's article is the interplay between consumerism and modernism demonstrated by Tenggren, who constantly revises and re-negotiates the relationship between form and content in his production.

Pia Vuorio focuses on complex mother-daughter relationships and ways of reading them. Revisiting Maud Reuterswård's Elisabet trilogy, Vuorio discusses depictions of parents, and more specifically mothers, in 1970's young adult fiction. Drawing on critics such as Luce Irigaray, Vuorio reveals how the clash between the voices of mother and girl challenges ideas of motherhood and prevailing power structures.

All fiction addressed by children's literature researchers is created within the frames of literary institutions. The aesthetics and ethical imperatives of children's books are therefore greatly influenced by institutional conditions. As I write these lines, the children's books community is shaken by the news of the death of Ulf Stark (1944-2017), the inimitable master of storytelling. A perceptive writer with a unique voice, he also contemplated the essence of children's literature. A defining feature of fiction is the elusive glimpse of the depths described by Ulf Stark in his poem "Forskarna sänker sina nät" [The scholars lower their nets] in *Till en evakuerad igelkott* (2012):

Forskarna sänker sina nät  
i djupen  
finmaskiga eller grövre.  
De agnar krokarna  
med sina bästa teorier.

Skrivbordslampornas fyrar blinkar.

Med doktorssydvästen på skallen  
och närläsningsglasögonen  
på näsan lutar de sig ut över relingen  
och betraktar det vilda  
med nykter blick.

Vad det glimmar där nere!

I gryningen halar de in sin fångst  
av teman och referenser.  
inte ett fjäll  
eller fena  
undgår deras analys.  
Allt klassificeras och saltas.

Bara själen slinker ständigt undan!

Den simmar oberörd omkring  
på botten av dig själv  
lockande och listig  
med lätta stjärtslag.

*Mia Österlund*  
*member of the editorial committee*