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Undogmatic Re(ve)lations

Eva Lindström's Picturebooks and the Animal-Human Gaze

Abstract: The Swedish illustrator and author Eva Lindström is an explorer of relationships – between human beings, animals, and the outside world. Her relational storyworld is inhabited by a host of humans and animals and things. No essential difference can be seen in her work between human and animal characters in terms of agency and subjectivity, yet the animal-human nexus allows Lindström to explore relational themes in depth and with great economy. The theoretical framing of my reading of two of her picturebooks – Musse *(*My Dog Mouse*, 2016) and* Lunds hund *(*Mr. Krup's Pup *2013) – derives from Martin Buber's classic work of relational theology,* I and Thou *(1923), and from a few passages in Jacques Derrida's foundational work in Animal studies,* The Animal That Therefore I Am *(1997). These seminal works in Animal studies are, furthermore, discussed and nuanced with the help of John Berger's and Donna Haraway's contributions to the field. My thesis is that Lindström's visual representations offer a complement and posthumanist corrective to Buber's and Derrida's fundamentally human-centered systems of thought. The pictures – as well as the sparse, precise words – decenter the human and focus on animal-human relationships. In so doing, Lindström peels away "the crust of thinghood," to use Buber's term. Finally, the animal-human gaze is essential to my discussion; the way in which Lindström's characters (human and animal) look (or avoid looking) at each other is revelatory. And while the human and animal gaze for both Buber and Derrida is a sign of human power and indicative of self-recognition/revelation, the direction and meaning of the gaze in Lindström's art also points towards the reciprocity of common creaturehood.*

Keywords: Eva Lindström, picturebooks, Martin Buber, Jacques Derrida, John Berger, Donna Haraway, animal-human gaze, animot, companion species, dog

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"The eyes of an animal have the capacity of a great language."
(Buber 144)

The Swedish illustrator and author Eva Lindström is an explorer of relationships – between human beings, with animals, and to the outside world.[1] This relational storyworld of hers is inhabited by a host of humans and animals and things. And although there is no essential difference in her work between human and animal characters in terms of agency and subjectivity, the animal-human nexus allows Lindström to explore in depth and with great economy, different ways of being and relating to each other. Themes such as trust and love are explored with the help of creature-characters that can be both human and animal.[2] In her literary-artistic menagerie, dogs are particularly prominent, from her early picturebooks – *Gunnar i granskogen* (Gunnar in the fir forest, 1994, co-written with Börje Lindström) and *Limpan är sugen* (Limpan is hungry, 1997) to her more recent *Musse* (*My Dog Mouse*, 2016), *Lunds Hund* (*Mr. Krup's Pup*, 2013), and *Mycket att göra hela tiden* (Always much to do, 2019)[3]. In fact, there is indeed a great deal to do if one wants to explore Lindström's dog picturebooks in depth and detail. Here, I will focus on *Musse* and *Lunds hund* since these two picturebooks mirror and complement each other thematically. Thus, the aim of the article is to show how *Musse* and *Lunds hund*, read in tandem, offer valuable commentary on each other and on philosophical questions to do with relational themes and concepts.

As for previous research on other aspects of Eva Lindström's picturebooks, but with a bearing on the present article, I will mainly draw on chapters and interviews by Elina Druker, Maria Jönsson, and Åsa Warnqvist. Critically, the theoretical perspective in this article derives from Martin Buber's classic work of relational theology, *I and Thou* (1923), and also takes its cue from a few passages in Jacques Derrida's foundational work in Animal studies, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (1997). My thesis is that Lindström's visual representations offer both a complement to and an escape from the language/logos of Buber's and Derrida's ultimately human-centered systems of thought. My reading of the two picturebooks - the method - can best be described as a thematic-conceptual analysis of how Lindström's human and animal characters relate to each other throughout *Lunds hund* and *Musse*. In the analysis, I pay attention to both the verbal and visual levels of the narratives of the two picturebooks. Although the relational concepts then brought to bear on the texts have been sampled from some of Buber's and

Derrida's work on animal-human relationships, the analysis does not end there; the result of the picturebook analysis is then used to critique these concepts. After all, critical work can also be regarded as relational, and the *object* of research can become the *subject* of research, thus affecting how we in turn may understand fundamental concepts and theories.

Animals and Children's Literature

Children's literature is filled with animals, from the classic animal fables of Aesop and La Fontaine and the talking animals of folk and fairy tales, to classic and recent animal stories and novels, such has Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877) and Jean-Claude Mourlevat's *Jefferson* (2018), not to mention children's information books about pets, farm animals, and wildlife through the ages. No doubt the proliferation of animals (and toy animals) in children's literature partly reflects children's fascination for real animals. But there is more to it than that. Animal/anthropomorphic narratives are useful since they allow authors of children's books to avoid directly addressing complex or controversial cultural and moral issues to do with race, class, gender, religion, and sexuality by using the "animal alibi" (as I would call it)[4] – very *human* issues, in fact. In any case, an underlying reason why children can be substituted for animals is that animals, like children, are seen (and treated) as different from adult humans. As Maria Nikolajeva notes: "small children, from an adult's perspective, have much in common with small animals, and […] their behavior and mentality are closer to those of animals than of civilized human beings" (65). But the conflation of animal and child does not only suggest uncivilized nature in a negative sense: "the Romantic belief in the child's unity with nature has contributed to the vast number of animal stories for a young audience" (Nikolajeva 64). In other words, the animal-child can on the one hand show the child as powerless, uncivilized, and animalistic. But on the other hand it can also imply that the child is closer to nature and creation (God) than adults. Both views presuppose that unlike the adult, the child and the animal share the same essential nature, one that is distinct from that of the adult. It should come as no surprise then, that children's literature is full of animals that can talk and children who can understand what they say. (The ability to talk with animals is of course also a wish-fulfilment fantasy of the same order as being able to fly or being invisible or changing outward form.) Nor is it strange in such a context that the animal can become a child or the child

an animal. The child state is per definition characterized by transformation, change, growth, and maturation.

Posthuman Companion Species/Creatures

Since animals – anthropomorphic or not – play such a central role in children's literature it follows that there is a considerable critical discourse on the subject as well. To mention some of the more important recent contributions, we have Tess Cosslett's *Talking Animals in British Children's Fiction 1786–1914* (2006), which takes its cue from nineteenth-century debates about the relationship between animal and human in animal stories for children; Zoe Jaques's *Children's Literature and the Posthuman: Animal, Environment, Cyborg* (2015), in which Jaques shows how a philosophy of humanness can emerge from children's animal fantasy; and Kit Kelen and Chengcheng You's *Poetics and Ethics of Anthropomorphism: Children, Animals, and Poetry* (2022), which focuses on the ethics of the poetic relations between children and animals and nonhumans. Roxanne Harde's article "'Doncher be too Sure about That!' Children, Dogs, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's Early Posthumanism" (2015) has been particularly useful for my reading of Eva Lindström's picturebooks, since it shows how fictional works can "talk back" from within the very genre that they are part of, that is, the anthropomorphic children's book. Further, in her article, Harde shows how Phelps's work in some ways anticipates and articulates posthuman notions of the "companion species" (to use Donna Haraway's term[5]). Harde writes: "Both Haraway and Phelps take dog-human relationships seriously enough that they write them as central metaphors and metonyms to instruct humans on how to be in this world" (12). This brings me to a brief discussion of Donna Haraway's contribution to Animal studies. In *The Companion Species Manifesto*: *Dogs, People and Significant Otherness* (2003), she shows that dog-human relationships offer "a story of co-habitation, co-evolution, and embodied cross-species sociality [that] might more fruitfully inform livable politics and ontologies in current life worlds" (4). In her larger work, *When Species Meet* (2008), she also levels a critique against Derrida's ultimately anthropocentric stance on human-animal relationships, something that I will return to.

I-Thou-It: Theories of Interspecies Relationships

In his seminal study of relational theology, *I and Thou*, Martin Buber maintains that "there are three spheres in which the world of relation

is built" (149). These are "life with nature, where the relation sticks to the threshold of language. The second: life with men, where it enters language. The third: life with spiritual beings, where it lacks but creates language" (150). As we can see, language is central to the relational spheres, but what is Buber's understanding of language? As I read Buber, language appears both as denotation, communication, and creation (that is, logos/God), and is central to the two relational forms that Buber identifies, namely the "I-It" relationship and "I-Thou" relationship. The "I-It" relation is denotational, analytic, and descriptive; but also (necessarily) reductive – it objectifies things, animals, and people, but makes the world knowable at the same time. It provides a practical, useful, and worldly perspective. The *ideal* relation, however, is that of "I-Thou," which makes it possible for us to interact with the world in its whole being. Buber writes that, "every actual relationship in the world rests upon individuation" (148). The "I-Thou" relationship is a subject-to-subject relation, or, expressed otherwise, "unity of being," as in a true love relationship. For Buber, "I-Thou" is only perfectly achieved in and with God. Or, expressed otherwise, one could say that God *is* the "I-Thou" relationship, hyphen and all. Yet, the "I-Thou" relationship can enter into the other spheres as well: with our fellow humans, as well as with nature/animals. This is not something easily achieved, however. Buber, with yet another wonderful expression, points to the challenge involved: "There is so much that can never break through the crust of thinghood!" (146).

But interestingly, although animals (nature) have the ability to break through this "crust of thinghood" even if they only communicate at "the threshold of language," Buber "look[s] into the eyes of a house cat" and notes that:

> The eyes of an animal have the capacity of a great language. Independent, without any need of the assistance of sounds and gestures, most eloquent when they rest entirely in their glance, they express the mystery in its natural captivity, that is, in the anxiety of becoming. This state of the mystery is known only to the animal, which alone can open it up to us – for this state can only be opened up and not revealed. (Buber 144)

What interests me here is that Buber provides the animal (his cat) with agency, for it "alone can open it up [the mystery] to us." When the cat looks at him, it affects him in "the world of relation." To me this suggests agency and creaturely intersubjectivity. But the perspective is still quite anthropocentric. Nature is at "the threshold

of language," the "eyes of an animal have the *capacity* of a great language" (my emphasis), and mute animal communication is characterized by an "anxiety of becoming."

The feline gaze is my cue to move on to Jacques Derrida. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am* Derrida writes that the cat,

> comes to me as this irreplaceable living being that one day enters my space, into this place where it can encounter me, see me, even see me naked. Nothing can ever rob me of the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized. (Derrida 24)

In other words, the cat (in this case) and the man has an intersubjective relationship. They are on a first-name basis with each other, as it were – Jack and the cat.[6] Buber, or should we say Martin, might have called it an "I-Thou" relationship, and claimed that they have broken through the crust of thinghood by refusing conceptualization. But Derrida does not make that radical claim; he stops short. He does remark that the cat is a "real cat" in the sense that it has "unsubstitutable singularity" since "[w]hen it responds in its name […] it doesn't do so as the exemplar of a species called 'cat,' even less so of an 'animal' genus or kingdom" (24). It is now a "mortal existence,"

> for from the moment that it has a name, its name survives it. It signs its potential disappearance. Mine also, and that disappearance, from this moment to that, *fort/da*, is announced each time that, with or without nakedness, one of us leaves the room. (Derrida 24)

The cat has entered not just the room, but entered "language," and so has Jacques. The opposite, an unindividualized and unnamed cat, on the other hand, is an "animot," an animal without subjectivity with whom true intersubjectivity is impossible. But in the scene described by Derrida, they stand naked before each other. I take that to mean that each being is present wholly, undisguised (literally and figuratively), as individuals. However, for Derrida, the philosopher, this only has human consequences; he draws a blank when it comes to the cat (as a recognized individual), presumably because of its radical alterity, and does not consider the possibility of true communication with the cat or of flipping the perspective from man to cat. Haraway writes:

> My guess is that Derrida the man in the bathroom grasped all this, but Derrida the philosopher had no idea how to practice this sort of curiosity that morning with his highly visual cat. Therefore, as a

> philosopher he knew nothing more from, about, and with the cat at the end of the morning than he knew at the beginning. (Haraway, *When Species Meet* 22)

Haraway regrets Derrida's failure to go beyond the human in his description of his meeting with his cat:

> But whatever else the cat might have been doing, Derrida's full human male frontal nudity before an Other, which was of such interest in his philosophical tradition, was of no consequence to her, except as the distraction that kept her human from giving or receiving an ordinary polite greeting. I am prepared to believe that he did know how to greet this cat and began each morning in that mutually responsive and polite dance, but if so, that embodied mindful encounter did not motivate his philosophy in public. That is a pity. (Haraway, *When Species Meet* 23)

What Haraway does is to point to the relational aspect and to the interest of the other species/creature in the room, namely the cat, and that Derrida misses those aspects in his otherwise shrewd unpacking of what it means to humans to encounter animals.

Finally, any discussion of human-animal relations would be incomplete without mentioning John Berger's essay "Why Look at Animals?" (1980), a text which in some ways anticipate Derrida's essay. One is for example reminded of Derrida's encounter with the cat, when Berger writes that "the animal – even if domesticated – can also surprise the man. The man too is looking across a similar, but not identical, abyss of non-comprehension" (14). For Berger this abyss, or "unspeaking relationship" (15), between humans and animals is what drives symbolic thinking and language. He writes, "if the first metaphor was animal, it was because the essential relationship between man and animal was metaphoric" (16). But the importance of the reciprocal human-animal gaze goes beyond language: "with their parallel lives, animals offer man a companionship which is different from any offered by human exchange" (15). Yet, these defining traits of human-animal relationality have largely been lost over the last hundred years, according to Berger. Animals have become invisible practically, economically, and culturally through commodification and "the culture of capitalism" (37), and we humans are now a "species which has at last been isolated" (37).

It is now time to shift focus from one companion species to another, from Buber's and Derrida's cats to Lindström's dogs. As I have noted already, dogs and humans are portrayed in great

variation and depth in several books by Eva Lindström, In this article, I focus on *Musse* and *Lunds hund*. I will argue that Lindström's visual and verbal representations offer both a complement to and an escape from the language/logos of Buber's and Derrida's fundamentally human-centered systems of thought. The pictures – as well as the sparse, precise words – decenter the human and focus on the animal-human relationship. The animal-human gaze is, for example, important to my discussion. For the way in which Lindström's characters (human and animal) look (or avoid looking) at each other is revealing, I believe. The human and animal gaze in both Buber and Derrida is a sign of power, of self-recognition/revelation, and of reciprocity. For Berger the inter-species gaze (or lack thereof) defines what we – and animals – are. Hence, the direction and meaning of the gaze in Lindström's art is significant. Other aspects also carry significance, such as narrative point of view, setting, color palette, the use of spaces and clutter, as well as the thematics of consumption, ownership, and reciprocity.

Lunds hund: Objectification, Commodification, and "The Crust of Thinghood"

Lunds hund is, simply put, the story of a man, Lund, who owns a dog. This is signalled already by the possessive of the book title *Lunds hund* (Lund's dog). The canine protagonist does have a name ("Kulan" – literally "The Ball") but is in a sense an animot. She – because it is a female – is objectified. Her posture on the cover (image 1) is reminiscent of the model on Édouard Manet's famous painting, *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), a nameless nude among male artists, subjected to a voyeuristic gaze, yet not acknowledged with eye-contact by the men in the painting. One can also argue that the representation of Kulan is in the anthropomorphic tradition, as an animal pet dressed up in human attributes and traits, alternatively (or simultaneously) a human partner disguised as an animal.

In the text, Lund's relationship to Kulan is described in terms of a project. As such it/she means a great deal to him. He overfeeds her and second-guesses what she wants and needs. Lund compensates for the lack of true relationality by "taking down the moon for her." He takes the trite love metaphor literally, builds a rocket, flies to the moon, and takes it into his backyard for the dog to play with. Kulan, for her part, is lazy, deceitful, and gluttonous. She understandably lacks true affection for Lund and does not try to communicate properly with him, presumably because she knows it is useless.

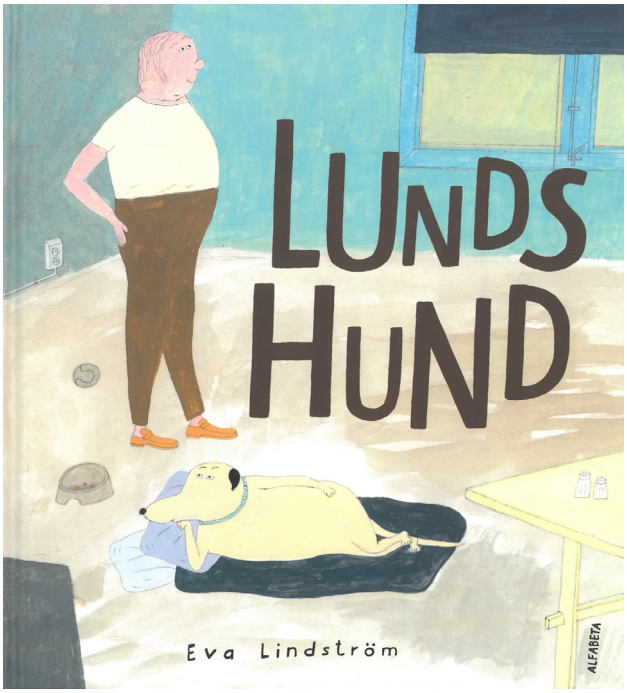

Image 1. Cover of *Lunds hund* (2013) by Eva Lindström. © Eva Lindström.

One can sense frustration in interactions such as the following:

> Kommer snart, ropade Lund.
> Och så for han iväg ut i rymden.
> Snopet på nåt vis att han bara for iväg sådär.
> Och kommer snart? Vad betyder det? (Lindström, *Lunds hund*)[7]
>
> (Will be back soon, shouted Lund.
> And then he took off into space.
> A bit disappointing that he just left like that.
> And be back soon? What does that mean?)

In image 2 we see Kulan checking the fridge for something to eat while glancing towards the backyard where the rocket is taking off. The questions are left hanging in the air. The disappointment and uncertainty of Kulan is not communicated directly with the help of third-person discourse markers, such as "thought Kulan," instead the discourse is given as *erlebte rede*, where the narration wavers between perceived first- and third-person narration. The focus is also on the dissatisfaction and ennui of Kulan, while Lund's thoughts and feelings remain hidden – for both Kulan and the readers.

Image 2. The take-off. From *Lunds hund* (2013) by Eva Lindström. © Eva Lindström.

This implies that Kulan is the focalizing character of the narrative. The illustrations, which cover the period of the moon expedition support this interpretation since they show Kulan, alone in the house, rather than Lund in his rocket. In several of the other illustrations, Lund is fixing things outside the house while Kulan remains inside, confined to the house; she appears outdoors only once, playing with the moon in the rather hemmed in backyard.

In the fridge/take-off-illustration Kulan looks out towards Lund, who has already taken off (see image 2). In fact, almost all of the pictures show Lund or Kulan looking in the direction of the other, while the other looks elsewhere, or is absent. Indeed, their eyes never lock. There is never recognition and reciprocity. The, "capacity for a great language," to borrow Buber's expression, which can occur when we see each other, is not realized. The relationship between Lund and Kulan can be characterized as that of subject to object. In Buber's terms it is an "I-It" relationship rather than "I-Thou."

Aesthetically, this is also conveyed by the book's bluish color palette, which reflects the cold relationship,[8] by the spaces between things and characters, which indicate the characters' isolation from each other,[9] and by the clutter and dirt, which obstruct and distort communication. The "crust of thinghood" lies thick over the pages, as it were. On the final page, Kulan looks out of the window; Lund is busy cooking. These are the last words in the book:

En ny dag.
Kanske en helt annan sorts dag.
Jag gillar solen jag, sa Kulan.
Säjer du det? sa Lund. (Lindström, *Lunds hund*)

(A new day.
Maybe a completely different kind of day.
I do like the sun, said Kulan.
You don't say? said Lund.)

The two are caught in a loop, or vicious circle, that does not allow them to properly meet and communicate as subject to subject. They do not see each other, literally. Needless to say, it will not be a different kind of day; it is not even a "new day," I would argue. It is more of a Waiting for Godot-situation where Lund will now try to bring down the sun for Kulan to play with – to own – just like he in turn owns his dog, Kulan (a "Ball," just like the sun and the moon). Here one can add that according to Berger's ideological critique, the historical process in which humans and animals become invisible to each other culminates in capitalist consumer society. The end point is the commodification of animals, the emptying of relational meaning, and ultimately our own dehumanization.

The Interspecies Companionship of *Musse*

Now we turn to *Musse*, a very different exploration of intersubjective (and interspecies) relations. *Musse* begins with a declaration of love – "Jag älskar Musse" (I love Musse) – and ends with the words – "Jag önskar att han var min" (I wish he was mine) – a formula which carries with it its own fulfilment (Lindström, *Musse*). The story is simple: a child takes an old dog for a walk and then returns it to its owner. In-between, the narrating child describes the different things they do: having a picnic, being kind to each other[10], and walking slowly:

Vi går vidare så långsamt som vi bara kan. Alla andra går om oss, vi är hela tiden de som är längst bort. Först tar vi ett litet steg och sen gör vi en paus, sen ett steg till och en paus och så där håller vi på.
Steg, paus. Steg, paus. Steg, paus. (Lindström, *Musse*)

(We walk as slowly as we are able to. Everyone else overtakes us. We are always the ones furthest away. We take a small step and then we pause, then another step and pause, and so we go on.
Step, pause. Step, pause. Step, pause.)

Image 3. Walking slowly. From *Musse* (2016) by Eva Lindström. © Eva Lindström.

The unique relationship between the child and the dog is accentuated throughout the book. The slow walking pace is described in terms of an achievement ("as slowly as we are able to"). The narrator then exemplifes by saying that they are constantly overtaken and passed by "everyone else." The illustration drives home the point by showing, in the upper right corner of the spread, three truncated grown-up figures moving out of the picture, their upper bodies cut away. On the left side of the spread, the child and the dog look at each other, connected by the lead as by an umbilical cord. They are not distressed at being always "furthest away" from all the hasty and stressed people; rather, they look pleased to be in that privileged space, at the center of each other's company. Their companionship is borne out by the use of the first person plural: "*We* walk as slowly as *we* are able to. Everyone else overtakes *us*" and so on. The narrative focalization would have been very different if this had been given as "I walk as slowly as I am able to." The descriptions made by the implied child narrator concern their walk, what they do, what they see, but mainly they are about Musse. The child describes the old dog in loving detail:

> Han är gammal och tjock och öronen är tunna som pannkakor. Han vaggar när han går och blir alltid glad när han får syn på mej. (Lindström, *Musse*)

> (He's old and fat with ears as thin as pancakes. His walk is a kind of waddle and he's always pleased to see me.)

The first-person narrative – shifting back and forth from first person singular ("I," "me") to first person plural ("we," "us") – expresses utter self-lessness and complete focus on the well-being of the other, to the point that the rest of the world almost disappears. In her analysis of *Musse*, Maria Jönsson comes to a similar conclusion:

> Relationen formar det älskande jaget som blir så inriktat på den andre att det glömmer bort sig själv – barnet märker till och med att den egna rösten blir snällare i närheten av Musse. (Jönsson 170)[11]
>
> (The relationship shapes the one who loves to the point that she becomes so absorbed in the other that she forgets her own self – the child even notices that her voice becomes kinder when she is close to Musse.)

Except for the first and last illustration, all of the action takes place outdoors. In the first illustration the child is expectantly leaving home (looking right, in the direction out of the picture); in the last picture, the reader sees Musse through a window, looking out after the child. Unlike the domestic indoor scenes of *Lunds hund*, where Lund and Kulan do different things, Musse and the child are in the open, doing things together. They are never separated.

In image 3, and on most spreads which include both characters, we see how the eyes of the child and Musse lock, and that they are fully intent on the other (in glaring contrast to the dysfunctionality of Lund and Kulan). Even in the few illustrations where they do not look at each other, they are fully aware of the other. When they eat sandwiches in the park, the child on purpose looks away: "Musse äter upp min smörgås också medan jag tittar mycket noga på ett moln" (Musse eats my sandwich too, while I look very carefully at a cloud; Lindström, *Musse*). In another illustration, a strong wind forces Musse to close his eyes and squint, while the child looks back at him to see that he is doing all right.

The warm color tone also harmonizes with the content. Again, it is useful to compare with the cold bluish tones of *Lunds hund*. In this picturebook of a loving relationship, Derrida's notion of subjectivity and naming, rather than the collective "animot" (non-individualized, referent, "animal") finds expression. But Lindström takes it further than Derrida allows for; it is not only the child's subjectivity that is realized in the meeting with the animal. Musse's perspective is

also displayed, his subjectivity and agency celebrated, as when he expresses joy in seeing the child, or when eating the sandwiches and all of the meatballs. Above all, the relationship is in focus. The child and the dog are completely focused on each other. It is the opposite of possession. And it does not matter that the one is a dog and the other a human.

Besides the animal gaze, it is the animal's "unspeaking" (to use Berger's term) that defines animals' essential relationship to humans and prompts philosophical reflection. For Buber the cat communicates "without any need of the assistance of sounds and gestures" (144), solely through its eyes, and opens up "the world of relation" (149). For Derrida it is the cat's mute presence that leads to individuation and intersubjectivity. And for Berger the unspeaking animal interlocutor is what prompts language and symbolic thinking (what makes us human) in the first place. In *Lunds hund*, both Lund and Kulan have words; they talk and think like human characters. But instead of narrowing the interspecies gap (the "mystery," to use Buber's term), it isolates both of them. In *Musse*, the child narrator makes language (and love) through the mute, but eloquent interaction with Musse. By not giving in to anthropomorphism, as in *Lunds hund*, and choosing to portray Musse realistically, as an old and mute dog, the child becomes a speaker of language, assuming humanity.

Image 4. I wish he was mine. From *Musse* (2016) by Eva Lindström. © Eva Lindström.

In the last spread and the following single page, the child and the dog are separated. Yet their beings are now full of each other. The child walks away, thinking "I wish Musse was mine," while the final page shows Musse gazing longingly after the child (image 4). If ownership, objectification, and lack of communication are themes in *Lunds hund*, *Musse* is the story of a subject-to-subject, "I-Thou" relationship, where animal beings (a dog, a human child) live for and in each other's presence. Along with the recurring first-person plural narration, the final image

also exemplifies that the child's perspective is not all-pervasive. The child – but not the reader – is unaware of Musse looking through the window after her.

Conclusion

Lindström's pictures – as well as her sparse, precise words – decenter the human and focus on animal-human relationships. In so doing, she peels away at "the crust of thinghood," to use Buber's term. Finally, the animal-human gaze is essential to my discussion. The way in which Lindström's characters (human and animal) look (or avoid looking) at each other is revelatory. And while the human and animal gaze in both Buber and Derrida is primarily a sign of human power, as well as being indicative of human self-recognition/revelation, the direction and meaning of the gaze in Lindström's art also points towards reciprocity and common creaturehood. The role of speaking versus unspeaking animals is also explored in these two picturebooks. Paradoxically, it turns out that it is the dog's lack of verbal language in *Musse* that prompts communication and companionship rather than Kulan's speech and thoughts in *Lunds hund.*

Both in Buber and Derrida, the difference between genuine intersubjectivity and objectifying othering is laid out. Yet both philosophers ultimately fail to grant animals subjectivity and agency. Taking my cue from Harde and Haraway – and, more importantly, from Eva Lindström – I would argue that we can relate to both humans and animals (and the world at large[12]) in two ways, either as subject to subject or subject to object, or, in other words, either establish "I-It" or "I-Thou" relationships. To me, it seems that Buber's relational theology opens for this possibility. What is abundantly clear, is that Eva Lindström's picturebooks, not least her dog picturebooks, explore such relationships in detail and with great artistic insight and originality. Together, *Lunds hund* and *Musse* stand as a diptych of animal-human relationships.

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Noter

1 I dedicate this article to the memory of Gimli.

2 See "An Interview"; Warnqvist; Jönsson.

3 To date, only two of these books have been published in English, *Musse* (as *My Dog Mouse*) and *Lunds hund* (as *Mr. Krup's Pup*); the other English titles, provided here in parentheses, are my translations of the Swedish titles.

4 A similar alibi argument could be made for the fictional uses of alien extraterrestrials, mythical and legendary beings, fantasy races, AI and cybernetic beings.

5 It is interesting that Haraway chooses the term "companion species" rather than "companion creature." "Species" points to biology and science (taxonomy), "creature" to theology and ontology.

6 The name of the cat is actually Logos (!), but curiously, in the essay, Derrida only refers to her as "a little cat" (5).

7 All translations of Eva Lindström's texts are mine. I have chosen not to use the published English translation of *Musse*. The picturebooks are unpaginated.

8 See Sundmark, "Eva Lindström and the Stories Colors Tell."

9 Elina Druker writes, "Övergivna och utan funktion blir sakerna tecken för ensamhet och frånvaro" (abandoned and without function, the things become signs of loneliness and absence; 47, my translation).

10 "Han är för snäll för att bitas och jag är snäll tillbaka, och då blir han ännu snällare" (He is too kind to bite, and I am kind to him back, and then he is even kinder; Lindström, *Musse*).

11 My translation.

12 Haraway suggests that such relationality even can be extended to inanimate objects (*Manifesto*, 36).

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