



SCIENTIFIC FINAL REPORT

Two- and three-year projects and postdoctoral projects

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Project title: Pippi Beyond the Border: Pippi Longstocking in the German Democratic Republic

1. The three most important results of the project and what conclusions can be drawn from them

The story of the editorship of Pippi Longstocking is a paradigmatic illustration of how culture and politics were put to work in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). This project centred on the question of why the book was published so late? What factors might have militated against earlier approval and why, or under what circumstances, was it finally possible to publish the book at all? The answer of these questions is that Pippi did not conform to a socialist ideal but that Sweden as a focus of diplomacy was too important not to publish a children's book that had gained so much international attention (and influenced children's book publishing in the West), The GDR identified Sweden early on as a key nation, a "Schwerpunktland". With a historian (who also grew up in the GDR) also comes a deeper understanding of the political situation. The reception of Pippi is thus interpreted in the light of the policy documents at the Bundesarchiv that preceded its publication. With a rhetorician, the negotiation itself, but also the text and image relation that to some extent were the result of this negotiation, comes into play. Together we examined censorship as a dispositive of political rule in the field of cultural production that not only follows the top-down direction, but also has inherent acts of negotiation despite all the asymmetry of power.

Pippi arrived in the FRG in 1949 at the Oetinger Verlag, while it took until 1975 for her books to be published in the GDR. It was quite late compared to other countries in the Eastern Bloc. Pippi was introduced to Russian children with illustrations by Irina L. Tokmakova as Пеппи Длинный Чулок (Пиппи Длинный Чулок, 1968). Pippi also appeared in Poland and the former Czechoslovakia in 1968 with illustrations by Zbigniew Piotrowski and Karel Teissig, respectively. This delay can partly be explained by the fact that the attitude towards fantastic literature differed in the two countries. In the FRG, the post-war book market was quickly filled with translations of Nordic and English literature. Fantasy and nonsense became dominant genres. Domestic authors such as Otfried Preußler and Michael Ende soon joined Astrid Lindgren, whose books quickly gained a prominent position in the publishing house. After a brief phase of mainly problem-oriented literature in the 1970s, a new wave of fantastic literature emerged in the 1980s.²⁹ In the GDR, however, the situation was different. Here, fantastic literature played a more subordinate role. In a state where the aim was to educate the socialist citizen, other literature was considered more important. This fact applied not only to what was written for adults but also for children. In the mid-1970s fantastic literature did receive a certain boost, but the genre was still not very important. For example, only 100 titles of such children's literature were published in the entire period 1949—1989.



All publications in GDR were subject to authorization. This procedure, known as the print authorization procedure, covered not only domestic literature but also licensed literature. At least two opinions were sent to the Ministry of Culture together with the manuscript: one prepared by the editor and one external expert opinion. Both assessed the literary quality of the manuscript as well as its political message. Before an international book could be published in the GDR, it had to be approved by a commission consisting of a GDR official, a GDR educator and a GDR author. The purpose of the examination was to determine the position of the character in relation to the system. The GDR regime's authoritarian and highly didactic approach, combined with the already immanently pedagogical nature of children's books, meant that careful considerations were made not only about which books to publish, but also about their design. Books were taken into the service of the agenda. If in the FRG it was the publisher Friedrich Oetinger himself who decided to publish the Pippi books, in the East it was a state matter. This resulted in fundamental differences in the publishers' considerations. Coupled with a uniform, ideologically convergent, and statecontrolled education system, books were reshaped into tools for the all-round formation of a new kind of socialist human being. Publishing was therefore a political, ideological, and bureaucratic issue. GDR leaders spoke of need for "planning" cultural processes and "protecting" socialist art, constantly reminded artists of their "responsibility" not to damage the state or its reputation. The aim was to strengthen domestic book production in an attempt to assert its uniqueness. Moreover, Russian classics were translated more often than children's books from the West. Finally, though, in 1975, it was Pippi's turn. From the 1970s onwards, the state leadership was also liberal due to its belief in its own consolidated socialist world. Erich Honecker stated on 17 December 1971 at the 4th Congress of the SED Central Committee: "Based on the firm position of socialism, I believe that there can be no taboos in the field of art and literature."

The problem with Pippi was that the story does not represent a "socialist position", according to the extern reviewer Gerhard Holtz-Baumert. Holtz-Baumert describes Pippi's world as a Utopia, a children's counter-world construct and in dialectical opposition to the world of adults.⁴³ Emphasizing that Pippi's world is not only a parallel world, but also a counterpoint to the adult bourgeois world, a world where children's rights are taken seriously, he also suggests that the GDR has come closer to this dream than the West. He claims: "Let's look at Pippi this way: as an attempt to protect children from a stupid, pedagogic, helplessly evil world [...], from incomprehension and lack of love — as a plea for children [...]. Of course, this is not a socialist position — but it is a humanist one that should absolutely be honored." In his interpretation, Holtz-Baumert thus confirms the socialist position, although he gives a cautious hint that Lindgren herself may not be aware of the true potential of her story. Whatever the case may be, he claims, the story "embodies Lindgren's notions of a better future" of a socialistic counter-world to the west. He claims that "The socialist literature embraces every - thing that is valuable, defends it — sometimes even against itself — and upholds it. Pippi Longstocking can be printed here in this light, absolutely not uncritically. A defence against itself ' is also necessary in this respect." Gerhard Holtz-Baumert finally states: 'The idea of publishing Pippi Longstocking with a children's book publisher was on the table for a long time. Considerations and tests were necessary to determine the position. Pippi Longstocking is one of the most internationally popular children's books of the last 20 years. That alone is reason enough to pay attention, even if it does not justify uncritical adoption.' This sentence heads the file



containing the printing licence for Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking, published in the GDR in 1975.

Contrasting a common Western interpretation of Pippi with the one in Holtz-Baumert's certificate to the Ministry of Culture will tell us more about the framing of possible interpretation in different context. In the certificate Pippi is construed as a criticism of capitalist society. YA literature was equated with other forms of literature as part of the national literature in accordance with political wishes, strict rules and procedures, which in turn required adaptation. In order to adapt the stories about Pippi, the publisher Kinderbuchverlag Berlin cancelled the last book of three, in which Pippi sets out into the world on her own. As a result, Pippi was denied the right to travel abroad, and any dreams of becoming a South Sea princess were dashed. At the same time, some of the more problematic features of the stories were removed. Similar changes on similar grounds, but not nearly as striking, were made in the FRG and in Sweden but only later. In Sweden, the n-word debate started in 2015, forty years later.

2. The project's contribution to the international research frontline

Besides bridging existing knowledge gaps regarding childhood through the lens of Pippi, we have contributed to research on the cultural exchange between Sweden and the GDR. The two case studies of the two different editions highlight the ramifications of poetic introspection in a transnational setting. In Eastern Europe, communism had great pedagogical ambitions: building a new society was also about promoting new forms of social imagination and a new visual language. Lenin's plan for monumental propaganda is well known and well researched. The pervasive (visual) language that the socialist state developed for its children is no less important. Our interdisciplinarity was a necessity to seriously approach such issues. Here it is important not only to read literature ideologically and look for young pioneers, but to also look at publishing practices and texts in pursuit of aesthetic ideals.

3. The contribution of the research to the knowledge of the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe

Three conferences have been organised by Källström: 1. Symposium Graphic World of Children; 2. Material Perspectives on Astrid Lindgren, 3. Narrating the Child and the Baltic Sea. In addition, Källström and Soldwisch have together and separately published articles (open access) and presented at conferences. Together, Källström and Soldwisch have studied letters from East German children to Astrid Lindgren over time. The results of this part of the work will be presented at the symposium *Narrating the Child of the Baltic Sea* 19-21 May 2024. These letters are juxtaposed with questions about letter censorship and travel regulations. The GDR government regarded travelling as a potential risk for the regime, as it could be used to escape. Therefore, GDR citizens applying to travel to the West usually had to fulfil a number of conditions such as: Political trustworthiness. People who were considered politically trustworthy were more likely to be granted a travel permit. The children who write to Astrid Lindgren tell us that they would like to come to Sweden but cannot. They also talk about how they borrow books from each other and regret that there are no more of the author's books available. The symposium will result in an edited edition where the contribution will be published.



With regards to the publishing practices of the children's book Pippi Longstocking, through secondary literature and work in archives in Hamburg and Stockholm, this project has gained a lot of knowledge about publishing practices in the Baltic Sea region and the GDR. Additionally, similarities in appropriation practices in Eastern Europe have been identified. The late date of publication shows how closed the GDR was, but also what characterises this children's book market compared to other Eastern European markets. Fantastic children's literature was marginalized until the 1980s because it did not fit into the political value system of socialism. This had a strong impact on the thinking of children in the GDR and Eastern Europe, as literature had an educational function in the sense of socialism. Of course, children's literature also had an educational function in Western and Northern European countries, but this was not politically motivated and state-directed, but was the responsibility of the book publishers. Through our work in the Royal Archives in Stockholm, we have investigated children's appropriation practices and analysed how difficult it was for children in the GDR to read Astrid Lindgren's book. These findings have greatly expanded the research on restrictions and possibilities of literary appropriation in Eastern Europe.

4. New research questions that the project has led to

The project contributes to current research that sees the Cold War not only as a matter of division, isolation and containment, but also as a matter of cross-border exchange of ideas and cultural products. To many new questions that have almost never been investigated on an interdisciplinary basis. What remains to be done is a more comprehensive study that takes a broader approach to the publishing world, focusing on translation issues and materiality. Källström is presently outlining such a project. There are two possibilities here, either such a project describes the publishing practice at a publishing house, or it takes an even broader approach to translation issues beyond children's literature. In such projects, a historian is needed because all activities in the GDR were fundamentally political, but also a literary scholar with extensive experience regarding the literary discourse in West and East Germany. Such interdisciplinary projects opens up a new field of research on cultural relations between the GDR and Sweden and other Eastern European countries where children's literature does not become a branch of research but a material that, through its complexity, poses the researcher new questions about audience adaptation in what rhetoricians call the "rhetorical situation".

5. Dissemination of the results of the project within and outside the research community

Lisa Källström initiated the international network Graphic World of Children 2022, which has provided a forum for scholars to discuss issues related to material aspects. Although such issues are discussed in book history and media history, they have not received the same attention in literary studies. The network gathers online once a month since 2022 and will reconvene in May 2025 in the context of the symposium *Narrating the Child and the Baltic Sea*.



Selected Lectures

Presentations (Källström & Soldwisch) at conferences organised by Källström:

1. “How Pippi came to the German Democratic Republic”. [Graphic World of Children | International Symposium | Institutionen för kommunikation och medier | KOM](#)
2. The Book Pippi Longstocking in the GDR 1975 and 1988 - Possibilities and Limitations of its Materiality. Astrid Lindgren-symposium, Materiella perspektiv på Astrid Lindgrens författarskap | Institutionen för kommunikation och medier | KOM (lu.se). <https://www.kom.lu.se/forskning/konferenser-seminarier-och-natverkstraffar/astrid-lindgrens-dag/program-materiella-perspektiv-paa-astrid-lindgrens-foerfattarskap/>
3. “Between Desire and Reality – Crossing the Sea to Sweden. Letters from Children in GDR to Astrid Lindgren.” Narrating the Child and the Baltic Sea. 19-21 May 2024 (Södertörn), https://barnebokinstitutet.no/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Cfp_The-Child-and-the-Baltic-Sea.pdf.

Källström

1. “Sluta se så snäll ut Pippi.” Forskartorget, Bokmässan i Göteborg 2024.
2. “Strategical silencing and the noted unsaid: Pippi Longstocking in GDR as a Rhetorical Device”. Rhetoric as Strategic Thinking, 8th Rhetoric in Society Conference, University of Tübingen, 1-3 June 2023.
3. “Imagine the world upside-down”. Media Imaginaries: Marcus Wallenberg international symposium. 16 mars 2023.
4. “Pippi ur ramen: Från skiss till pämbild” Materiella perspektiv på Astrid Lindgren. Ort: Lunds universitet, 15 november 2022.
5. “I en värld av ting”. Nordisk konferens för retorikforskning. Ort: Örebro universitet, 12–14 oktober 2022.
6. “Visuality and Civic Imagination” Popular Culture and the Civic Imagination. Ort: Stockholms universitet, 2-3 maj 2022.

Soldwisch

1. June 2022. University of Düsseldorf: Pippi beyond the border – How Pippi came to the GDR.
2. November 2022, Lionsclub Urbs Regalis: The GDR publication of Pippi Longstocking in 1975.
3. May 2023, Publication practice in the GDR. Retorikkollegiet, Södertörn.
4. September 2023, Konstruierte Gesellschaftliche Realität? DDR-Kinder und Jugendliteratur der 70er und 80er Jahre und ihr Bezug zum Alltag“.



Soldwisch has furthermore lectured two courses on topics related to the project at RWTH Aachen University (*Phantastische Kinderliteratur in der DDR*, 2022) and at Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf (*Kinder- und Jugendliteratur in der DDR*, 2023).

Publications:

Källström & Soldwisch

Between Desire and Reality – Crossing the Sea to Sweden. Letters from Children in GDR to Astrid Lindgren, (will be published in 2025, after the conference Narrating the Child and the Baltic Sea, Ed. Beck Pristed & Källström)

Källström

1. “En dosis Pippi till östtyska barn.” *Mera Astrid Lindgren! Författaren, förläggaren och filmskaparen*. Redaktör Helene Ehriander & Eva Söderberg. Göteborg: Makadam (accepted in print, soon to be published, Open access).
2. “Upside down on a Horse Back: The Trickster Pippi Longstocking in the GDR”. *Baltic Worlds*, https://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Ka%CC%88llstro%CC%88m_Baltic_Worlds_2023_4.pdf (Open access)
3. “Are we stronger than men? Female characters in the GDR by the example of Karl Neumann's ‘Ulrike’ (1974).” [Sind wir stärker als Männer? Mädchenrollen in der DDR am Beispiel von Karl Neumanns Ulrike (1974)]. With Corina Löwe. Completed for conference volume, Potsdam, ed. Prof. Carsten Gansel (will be published in 2025, Open access).
4. Pippi and her GDR-Friends. Together with Jana Mikota. *Libri & Liberi*, (will be published in 2025, Open access).

Soldwisch

1. “The fear of the Word: Samizdat and political language in the real socialist dictatorship. *Baltic Worlds*”, June 2023. Open access.
2. “An Abridged Pippi Longstocking in the GDR and Eastern Europe - On the History of Eastern Publication Practices in Children's Books”, *European History Theme Portal*, www.clio-online.de; Humboldt University, Open access.
3. *Eigenstaatlichkeit ohne Souveränität? Das Souveränitätsnarrativ in der Außenpolitik der DDR zwischen Abhängigkeit, Legitimationsdruck und Systemkonkurrenz*. Thomas Maissen/Niels F. May/Rainer Maria Kiesow (Hrsg.): *Souveränität im Wandel, Frankreich und Deutschland 14.-21. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2023, S. 353-367. Open access: <https://doi.org/10.46500/83535455-019>.
4. *Das Jahr 1989 und seine Deutungen. Eine Begriffsgeschichte*, (will be published in 2025, Franz-Steiner-Verlag, Open access).