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IMMIGRANTS AND ELVES

The Everyday and the Fantastic in Danish

Photographical Children's Books

BY

METTE KIA KRABBE MEYER

Thinking of children's picture books, the first images which come to mind will most likely be drawings. Scandinavians will probably think of Pippi Longstocking in Ingrid Nymann's line,¹ or Alfons Åberg in Gunilla Bergström's, or of another of the many contemporary illustrations in children's books.² Numerous artists have illustrated fables, fairy tales, fantastic or everyday stories, and mixed genres. And numerous have been the exhibitions showing drawn and painted illustrations in children's picture books.³

Photography, the optical and chemical fixation of life's sheer surface, the rendering of "what has been", as described by Roland Barthes,⁴ in this context seems a villain. At first sight this medium couldn't have a role in a world of girls with supernatural powers, invisible friends, magical tinderboxes, talking animals, and more of the like. However, taking a closer look at Danish photographical children's books, photography has not only been used as illustrations in picture books which challenge the notion of children's literature as necessarily fantastic – that is in documentary stories of everyday life. Photography has also its own niche, its own ways of representing the imaginary in children's books.

There have been ups and downs in the history of photography in children's literature. In the 1950s, one out of four children's picture

¹ Astrid Lindgren: *Pippi Långstrump*, Stockholm 1945.

² Gunilla Bergström: *God natt, Alfons Åberg*, Stockholm 1972.

³ Albert Schug (ed.): *Die Bilderwelt im Kinderbuch: Kinder- und Jugendbücher aus fünf Jahrhunderten*, Köln 1988; Olivier Piffault (ed.): *Livres d'enfants d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, Paris 2008; Quentin Blake (ed.): *Magic pencil, children's book illustration today*, London 2006.

⁴ Roland Barthes: *La chambre claire*, Paris 1980.

books was illustrated with photographs.⁵ At other times photographs were sparse, but the point made in this article is that there is a constant stream of photographic children's books, and that from the beginning of the medium's history authors found their own ways of expressing the imaginary in photography.⁶ Think of photography within the surrealist movement and you will have a notion of how the most realistic medium – precisely because of its realism – can also seem extremely surrealist when staging or simple verbal interpretation is added.⁷

Children of the world

If we begin in the documentary field, photography has been used to present the lives of children from around the world. A prominent example is photographer Jette Bang's (1914–1964) *Grønlanderbørn* (Greenlandic children) from as early as 1944 (Ill.1).⁸ Bang was taken in by Greenland and its people at an early age. With a fresh formation as photographer in 1936, she went on her first trip to Greenland and returned with 400 photographs documenting life on the settlements up North. Soon after, she returned to shoot the film *Inuit* and then worked in parallel on various book projects. *Greenland* came out in 1940 and *Grønlanderbørn* for a younger audience in 1944. Bang was dedicated to telling the story of the inuits in images, and she spread knowledge about a culture disintegrating as a result of Danish influence. The text is rather elaborate and likely to appeal to children in higher grades, but the images address readers of all ages, and they soon became icons of inuit life. Like other images of their genre, they convey an impression of an optimistic, cheerful people living in close contact with a powerful nature. They have been challenged as true witnesses to Greenlandic life on the same premises that documentary

⁵ Nina Christensen: *Den danske billedbog 1950–1999. Teori, analyse, historie*, 2003.

⁶ I focus in this article on books with photographs and text, among these in particular those that are the outcome of collaboration between photographers and poets or fiction authors. Books consisting of photographs without text such as Hans Scherfig's *Cecilies bog*, 1976, and *Liljas bog*, 1977 (also including reproductions of engravings, paintings etc.), as well as Jesper Høm's and Sven Grønlykke's *Børnenes Billedbog*, 1975, are not dealt with, irrespective of their importance within the genre of photographic children's books.

⁷ Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingstone: *L'Amour Fou. Photography and Surrealism*, New York 1985.

⁸ Jette Bang: *Grønlanderbørn*, 1944.

Ill. 1: Danish photographer Jette Bang who worked for years documenting the lives of the Greenlandic People published *Grønlanderbørn* (Greenlandic children) in 1944. It's a fine example of the documentary vein within photographic children's books, telling the story of the life of children from around the world.



film and photographs have been challenged at least since the advent of semiotics and ideological criticism in the '60s and '70s.⁹ The optical–chemical rendering ensures that what is in sight in front of the lens imprints itself in an automatic way on the light-sensitive surface. But the gesture of pointing the camera and choosing the moment of exposure is of course a subjective act which together with the photographic situation itself makes the final image a photographic situation and not a window to the world.

Compared to other documentarists of children's lives, Jette Bang not only captures the typical and the representative. She has an intimate relation to the families whose lives she is documenting. This can be seen in the situations she is capable of retaining photographically. She has served as an ideal for many photographers working in this field since then. Likewise, quite a few documentary photographers have followed in her footsteps and produced photographic children's books.

At home with the family

In the 1960s and the '70s the political merged with the personal and so also the stories of children's everyday lives. Among the classical books are *Må jeg sove hos dig?* (May I sleep over?) published in 1975. It was written by Birgit Kragh (b. 1940) and illustrated by Gregers Nielsen (1931–2002), co-founder of Delta-Photos in 1964.¹⁰ *Må jeg sove hos dig?* is a story about the lives of the immigrants Vasilios and Tuula and their

⁹ Naja Illeris: Glimt af Grønland. Jette Bangs fotografier som danske repræsentationer af 1930'ernes Grønland. *Fund og Forskning*, 42, 2003, p. 341–405.

¹⁰ Birgit Kragh and Gregers Nielsen: *Må jeg sove hos dig?*, 1975.

daughter Anna, and that of Anna's best friend, Thor, and his mother, Margit, living a single life. The photographer turns all everyday activities into photographic motifs: the evening meal, playing and getting into bed. And especially the images of the children being together have the capacity to stimulate the memory of being immersed in playing: One does not pay attention to time, or what happens next door. One is just with the other children playing, and with the toys involved in playing. Nielsen enters this children's world by moving into the zone of intimacy between the child and the toy. When Thor is stretching out on the floor at eye level with his BRIO-train and mentally on board that train, Nielsen is down there with him, and the photograph thus conveys the absorption and empathy characteristic of the child's universe (Ill. 2). To those of us that have grown up in the 1970s, the detailed representation of materials: the textiles, painted wood, etc., makes the intimacy of the image mingle with our personal memories in an even more forceful way.

In the text, the message about accepting plurality is spelled out letter by letter. The choice of an immigrant family and that of a single mother is not accidental. The sympathetic promotion of family life which differs from the Danish nuclear family's norm stands out with clarity in the text but it is conveyed with greater subtlety in the photographs.

Other documentary works could be mentioned and analyzed in greater length, but I will now move on to the other and perhaps more surprising branch of photographic children's books, that is, the works where an imaginary universe is constructed by the use of photography. As will appear, there is not one way of expressing the imaginary within photography. And the imaginary, as elsewhere, comes in many forms. In this context we will begin with the photographic representation of supernatural beings and move on to a prominent theme: the humanizing of animals and objects. It is something that we sense has been captured in Nielsen's image of Thor playing with his train, but which in other photographic children's book is not only documented, but actively created either by staging or by applying text to the images.

Carnal elves

The tradition of humanizing animals and objects in photographic children's books can be traced back to the 1860s, and was initiated by



Ill. 2: Documentarist and co-founder of the Danish agency, *Delta Photos* (1964), Gregers Nielsen went close to the everyday lives of the children Anne and Thor in *Må jeg sove hos dig?* (May I sleep over?) published in 1975. His close-ups of children and their toys give the spectator a sense of the absorption and empathy characteristic of playing.

none else than the Danish icon of children's literature, Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875). *Fotograferede Børnegrupper* (Photographs of groups of children; published as facsimile with the title *Little Rhymes, Little Photos* in 2002) is the first Danish photographic picture book.¹¹ The photographs were taken by Harald Paetz (1837–95). After a career as an actor at The Royal Theatre, Paetz had in November 1865 established himself as a photographer in Copenhagen. He probably wished to attract customers to his atelier with this little publication and had convinced the then famous Andersen to contribute to it with short poems.¹² When the book appeared in 1866, reproduction techniques

¹¹ H.C. Andersen and Harald Paetz: *Fotograferede Børnegrupper*, 1866 (*Little Rhymes, Little Photos*, 2002) <www.kb.dk/e-mat/dod/115308039591.pdf>.

¹² Andersen must have known Paetz for some years, and mentions in his *Diary* in 1862 Paetz's presence at one of his Readings for the artists of the theatre ("Klokken 8 læste jeg for Kunstnerne"). On the 6th of November 1866, he writes: "Had some diarrhoea. Wrote *rhymes* for Pätz's pictures," and on the 19th: "Brought to Paets the *rhymes* I have

were yet to be developed, and so the illustrations are positives that have been glued into the book. According to Torben Weinreich, Professor of Children's Literature, the book lacks artistic and literary qualities and is foremost an example of Biedermeier culture.¹³ Certainly the short rhymes by H.C. Andersen are not a display of his poetic genius and in company with the staged photographs, they tend towards the moralistic. A child folding hands before going to sleep is accompanied by the words "Say with me your prayers before you go to sleep tonight, / Then in your dreams shall on your cheek an angel's kiss alight". Yet the imaginary is also present. The announcement of the angel's arrival in dreams – and its kissing of the child's cheek – already spurs the imagination to see the angel's appearance in the photograph. In this example no staging is used to express the imaginary, but take a look at the first image in the book (Ill. 3). A girl is sleeping – arms down, but still holding an open fairy tale book – dreaming of playing elves, the text tells us, and in this case the dream image also appears in the photograph. Three elves are posing behind the girl, and the image reminds one of spiritualist photography of the following decades, where ghosts of ancestors appear in photographs, or of the contemporary artworks of Duane Michals representing the soul of the deceased as a photographic double.¹⁴ Only with the important difference that the elves in Paetz's image are indeed very carnal. The girls were actually posing for the photograph and appear with the same clarity as the sleeping girl, whereas spiritualists and Michals are using different kinds of superimposition which make the figures appear transparent.

Galloping dining chairs

Thus, angels and elves from the child's dreamworld appear in the photographs either by the addition of text or by sheer staging. Daytime, however, is also rich in the imaginary. Harald Paetz has captured the soldier fighting with his doll on a rocking horse, and the boy holding

written for his photographs. He embraced me and pressed his cheek to mine." *H.C. Andersens Dagbøger*, vol. VII (1866–1867), 1972, p. 204 and 209.

¹³ Torben Weinreich: *Historien om børnelitteratur, dansk børnelitteratur gennem 400 år*, 2006.

¹⁴ Andreas Fischer and Veit Loers: *Im Reich der Phantome. Fotografie des Unsichtbaren, Ostfildern–Ruit 1997*. Clément Chéroux et al. (ed.): *Le Troisième œil. La photographie et l'occulte*, Paris 2004.



Ill. 3: Photography is also present in children's books with an imaginary content. The tradition in fact was initiated on the first page of the first photographic children's book *Fotograferede Børnegrupper* (Photographs of groups of children) from 1866 with photographs by Harald Paetz and texts by none else than the icon of children's literature, Hans Christian Andersen. A girl is sleeping, dreaming of playing elves, the short poem tells us, and behind her three girls dressed up as elves are actually posing for the photographer.

the reins of his four-in-hand of neighing dining chairs invites us to share his anthropomorphic worldview where dead things come to life in play. Just by looking at the photograph.

A favorite topic in the rendering of children's imaginary world by grown-ups is the child and the animal, foremost the pet. Children and animals hold many things in common seen from the adult writer's perspective, and numerous are the stories about the naïve world of both. Some have a negative, moralistic tone, others are positive praises of the world of the primitives. *Fotograferede Børnegrupper* includes a scenery with a girl explaining to her puppy that he may have sugar, if only he will say 'please', as her little brother does. In this case as in the example with the boy and his chair-driven cart the photographer and the poet do nothing but document the situation. In the 1950s and the 1960s, however, authors play the game and construct stories with not only puppets and teddies, but real animals which think and act as children and grown-ups.

Humanizing the animals

In *Historien om Ursula* (The story about Ursula), published in 1952, the urge to humanize animals is carried out to the extreme.¹⁵ A situation similar to children's play with their teddies is established when the photographer Allan Moe, the artist Sune Tellstrøm, and the author K.E. Hermann, are allowed to stage the bear cub Ursula in the Zoo. The photographs of the bear include all the classics of the playroom: the bear is dressed up, put in a stroller, playing the piano, etc. (Ill. 4). The text includes descriptions of Ursula's ignorance about the nature of many things and a fictional rendering of her life and conversation with other animals such as the girl polar bear called Snow White, Mr. Lion, Mr. Leo Pard, Peter the Sparrow, etc. A distinguishing fantasy of the photographer is acted out in the passage describing Ursula photographing Peter the Sparrow with the camera left behind by the photographer, a situation introduced in the beginning of the book with a photograph of Ursula, paw on trigger.

A story less cruel to animals is the book known to many Danish and foreign readers: as *Pingvinen Pondus* (Pondus the penguin).¹⁶ Soon after his entry into children's literature, Pondus was monopolized by

¹⁵ K.E. Hermann: *Historien om Ursula*, 1952.

¹⁶ Ivar Myrhøj: *Pingvinen Pondus*, 1966.

Ill. 4: A common phenomenon in children's books is humanized animals. We know Winnie the Pooh, Curious George and Babar the Elephant, all drawn protagonists who are then followed up by photographic humanized animals. The bear cub Ursula is one of these, and the book *Historien om Ursula* (The story about Ursula) from 1952 is an example of the at times rather scary consequences of the staging of real animals in children's photographic books.



Den Danske Bank, made into a leading figure in the bank's campaign stories, and produced as a money box owned and cherished by many children. Like Ursula, Pondus is dressed up, but only with a striking red scarf, and he is not tortured in strollers, on bicycles, etc., but walks freely around in the Zoo with the zookeeper. He meets a group of children from a kindergarten, and one of the children asks "Are you human or an animal?" Pondus answers "I am a penguin," which however doesn't sound completely convincing as he goes on *speaking* to the children, telling them about his life and family (Ill. 5). In *Pondus og hans venner* (Pondus and his friends) the reader is informed about different geographical and zoological facts, as for instance that penguins originate from the South Pole, whereas polar bears live on the North Pole, and that penguins and pelicans eat herrings.¹⁷ But more impor-

¹⁷ Ivar Myrhøj: *Pondus og hans venner*, 1966.



Ill. 5: In Ivar Myrhøj's *Pingvinen Pondus* (Pondus the penguin) from 1966 a boy asks Pondus: "Are you human or an animal?" Pondus answers "I am a penguin," but goes on *speaking* to the children, telling them about his life and family. The text humanizes the animal on the photograph, but one can say it works the other way around as well: the staging of the penguin on the photograph also gives us an impression of a person speaking rather than an animal.

tant is the story told in which Pondus is the wise and considerate friend offering the sick pelican his scarf and thereby curing the pelican. In this context, the text humanizes the photographs – and the animals. Seeing Pondus passing by, the seal (“with its big blank eyes”) asks: “Is it true that the old pelican is sick?” and looking at the photograph of the longbearded seal, we are convinced that the little animal is sharing Pondus’ concern for the pelican’s health.

A more thoughtful and poetic description of the humanized animal is found in *Der var engang en lille hest* (Once upon a time there was a little horse) from 1961, a story about a white horse leaving its fellow horses in the fields in order to visit the city of Stockholm on the other side of the fjord.¹⁸ Photographs are taken by the Swedish photographer Arthur Svenonius, while the texts are by Tove Ditlevsen (1917–1976), successful Danish author of fiction and poetry for grown-ups. In this photo-essay we recognize the composition taken over from fairy tales with the protagonist leaving home and meeting challenges in foreign lands. We can think of Babar coming to live in the city with the Old Lady and returning to Africa at the end of the book,¹⁹ or the Happy Lion on excursion in the city centre.²⁰ But in this case the story is told with photographs, which of course influence the way we experience the principal character. He cannot drive a car as does Babar, although the horse is staged leaving a tram. More often the horse is humanized by the author referring its thoughts. We see for instance the horse from the back looking towards the fjord, while the text tells us – with a not too ingenious reference to Hans Christian Andersen – that it feels like an ugly duckling among the brown horses, and is tempted by the sound of children’s voices, the chiming of bells, and the hooting of cars, from the city on the other side of the fjord. The text thus makes us see gloom, loneliness and longing in the portrait of the horse, as we felt motherly concern in the case of the seal in *Pondus og hans venner*.

As often in fairy tales, the protagonist experiences coming to a land of strange things and ways. The horse is puzzled by the coldness and stiffness of the statue of a naked boy, it presses its muzzle against the window pane in order to have a bite of the tasty green leaves, and it unknowingly disregards the sign saying “Please do not walk on the grass” (Ill. 6). Fortunately, the horse meets its soul mate. Just as the Happy

¹⁸ Tove Ditlevsen: *Der var engang en lille hest*, 1961.

¹⁹ Jean de Brunhoff: *Histoire de Babar*, Paris 1931.

²⁰ Louise Fatio: *The Happy Lion*, New York, Toronto, London 1954.

Lion is saved by his friend, the boy François, the white horse encounters a little white girl and feels intoxicated with happiness as it carries her on its back. She even calls the horse her white prince, and thus the story ends with a twist of the story of prince and princess living happily together ever after.

Talking cat and flying girl

Also in the 1980s, photographs were used to express the imaginary in children's picture books. Graphic artists Merete Byrial and Helle Madsen worked together on *Den lille prinsesse* (The little princess), privately published in 1987 on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the printing house C.Th. Thomsens Bogtrykkeri A/Å.²¹ On the cover of the booklet is a black and white photograph of a girl standing on the doorstep, hand on doorknob. The door opening has been cut out so as to reveal on the following page an underlying landscape, or rather a formation of illuminated clouds. Turning over the pages, we enter the dream-world of the little princess on the threshold between child and young girl, fact and fiction. She is suddenly feeling restless within the brick walls of her castle, and during the story she succeeds not only in breaking out of her home but also in transgressing the law of gravitation (Ill. 7). By the help of a talking cat she at the end flies away like the doves she had been watching enviously in the park. Photographs are often over-exposed so as to create an illuminated universe, and photography in this case also portrays the humanized cat and the supernatural powers of the princess flying. A distinctive feature in the publication is the hairlock in a parchment envelope glued into the book. It's a human remain, and thus a physical trace often related to the photograph and its optical-chemical registration of the world's reflections. This kinship was unfolded in 19th-century memorabilia in medallions and bracelets with inlaid photographic portraits and braided hair, and of course in personal letters, diaries and autograph books.²² Then, in the 1980s, it manifested itself in a new constellation in this photographic fairy tale for children where the hairlock is explicitly associated with secret powers in the well known tradition of fairy tales and popular belief. After having cut off the hairlock, the princess is addressed by the cat: "Stop! Don't you know that your power is in your hair?"

²¹ Merete Byrial and Helle Madsen: *Den lille prinsesse*, 1987.

²² See Geoffrey Batchen: *Forget me not. Photography and Remembrance*, Princeton 2004.



Ill. 6: Tove Ditlevsen and Arthur Svenonius' *Der var engang en lille hest* (Once upon a time there was a little horse) published in 1961 stages a classical figure: the naïve animal, but not the pitiable version we meet in *Historien om Ursula*. The little horse is rather a protagonist whose acts make visible the constraints and rules of civilization created by grown-ups.

Photography, fact and fiction

If surprised by the fact that children's picture books during history has included photographical illustrations, we understand that photography has often been used as illustrations, and that several ways of using this medium have been explored. Not only has photography

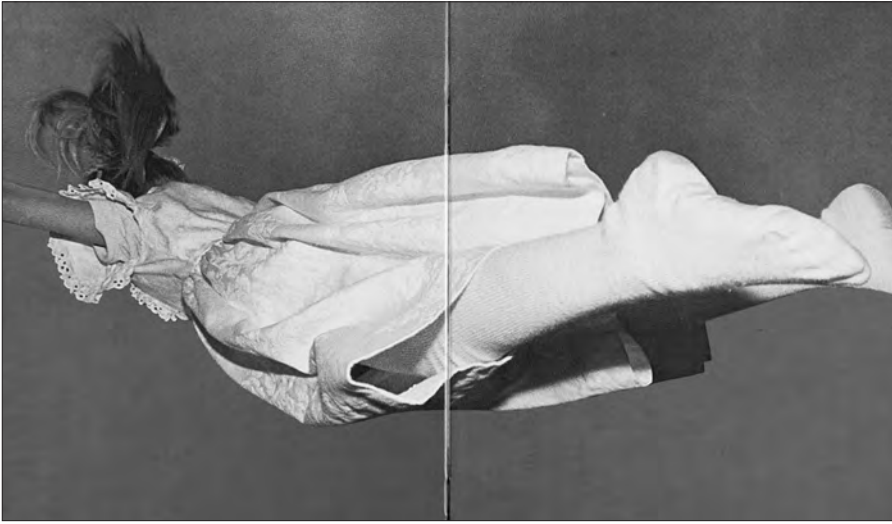
functioned as a means to document the everyday (with the reservations that are always due when using the term ‘document’), but it also appears in stories which enter into the imaginary. In *Fotograferede Børnegrupper* by Harald Paetz and H.C. Andersen, supernatural beings entered the photographic image in children’s photographic literature of 1866. Furthermore, a classical theme was introduced: the child immersed in play, often with toys that come to life. Some are ordinary objects like chairs, others are dolls and teddies. In the 1950s this theme is elaborated in books in which the author and the photographer actively stage not only dolls and teddies but also living animals. In some cases the humanizing of the animals takes on absurd dimensions, as in the case of Ursula. In this book the bear is civilized and its primitive ignorance is almost the object of scorn. In other, later cases the humanizing aspect is more limited, and the animal’s ignorance serves as a critical comment on human civilization. One does get the feeling that the author is expressing his or her opinions in the form of an animal protagonist, which, then, is an animalized human more than a humanized animal. This is most obvious, no doubt, in Tove Ditlevsen’s *Der var engang en lille hest*, and also in this case, photography in combination with text serves as an ideal medium for creating such an imaginary *persona*. In *Den lille prinsesse* from 1987 the protagonist is spoken to by a black cat, which challenges her earthbound self image. She listens carefully, and finally, thanks to the force (of her hair?), she is in the last photograph in the book seen floating in the air.

Danish photographic children’s books today

Today, collaboration between fiction authors and photographers such as Andersen and Paetz, Kragh and Nielsen (who also worked with Danish author Halfdan Rasmussen),²³ and Ditlevsen and Svenonius, are scarce. There are only a few examples of photographers and authors collaborating on children’s photographic picture books. A book worth mentioning is *For stor til at være lille eller for lille til at være stor?* (Too big to be small or too small to be big?) by photographer Tine Harden and author Maise Njor.²⁴ It situates itself within the by now well known genre: life among animals in the Zoo (*Historien om Ursula, Pingvinen Pondus*) with the story about baby elephant Gandhi and his family. Compared to its predecessors it contains a less sentimental humanization of the ani-

²³ Gregers Nielsen and Halfdan Rasmussen: *Jacob i Tivoli*, 1967.

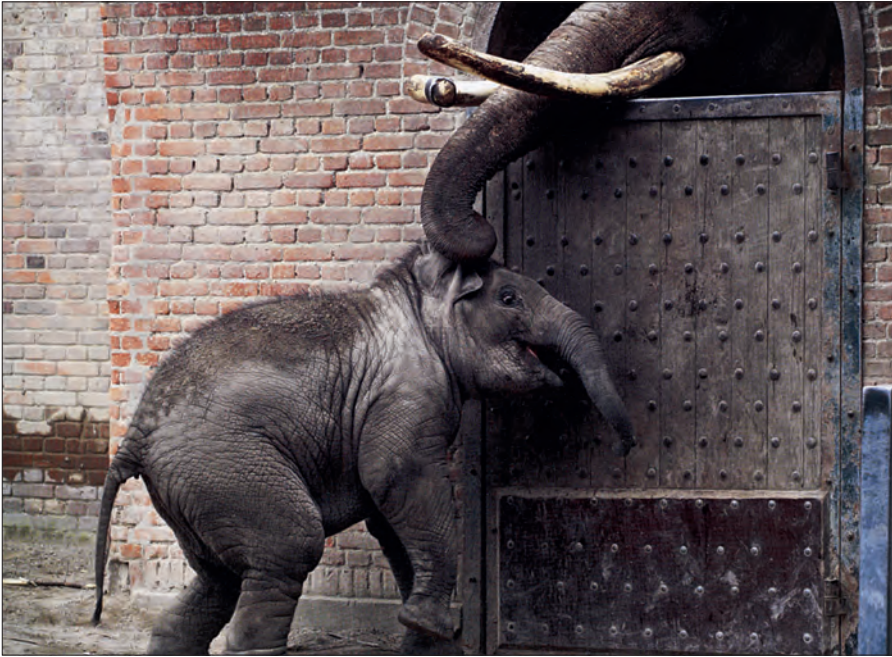
²⁴ Maise Njor and Tine Harden: *For stor til at være lille eller for lille til at være stor?*, 2008.



Ill. 7: A talking cat and a floating girl are among the imaginary traits in Helle Madsen and Merete Byrial's *Den lille Prinsesse* (The little princess). The photography shows itself useful when one wishes to give the impression of a world in which the laws of gravitation are transgressed.

mals, but fundamentally situates a classical childhood topic among the elephants: How can one be too small (to lift heavy tree trunks, to bathe alone) and then too big (to play with food etc.). There is no staging or dressing up of elephants. The humanization comes alone by choice of motif and interpretation, Gandhi picking up carrots or trying to move a tree trunk – or in what was apparently too tempting not to make into a scene of upbringing from the past: Gandhi is said to be pulled by the ear by his father (Ill. 8).

Authors of fiction and poetry for grown-ups, Christina Hesselholdt, Kirsten Hamann, Martin Glaz Serup, and numerous others, have written and published children's picture books, but they have mostly worked with artists expressing themselves in drawing and painting. Maybe the river has run dry for good, maybe we are just witnessing a period of drought. It is obvious, however, that neither the fantastic nor the documentary potential of photography has been exhausted. And new interesting ways of combining the two have been developed elsewhere in Scandinavia. The Faroese artist Stian Hole thus uses photographs in digital permutations with drawings and paintings. In his colourful land-



Ill. 8: Compared to its predecessors Tine Harden and Maise Njør's *For stor til at være lille eller for lille til at være stor?* (Too big to be small or too small to be big?) published in 2008 contains a less sentimental humanization of the animals. It is however tempting to interpret the pull by the ear of the baby elephant as a scene of strict upbringing from the world of man.

scapes, photography (in digitally processed variations) touches us with its realism in different fantastical sceneries. In his book *Garmanns sommer* (Garmann's summer), he tells the story of the boy Garmann and his fears. Garmann is soon attending his first day in school which makes him a little afraid. His aunts come to visit, and they tell him about the things they fear. Aunt Borghild is scared of death we are told. In the picture her wrinkled skin seems as carnal to us as Paetz and Andersen's elves did (Ill. 9).²⁵ The contrast between the drawn flower-patterned dress lifted up by a pair of orange coloured wings, and the photographic representation of aunt Borghild's face and hands enhances the realism of the latter. She is approaching the Garden of Eden in this surrealistic montage for children anno 2013, and thus leaves us behind with our curiosity for the everyday and the fantastic in Danish children's photographic picture books of tomorrow.

²⁵ Stian Hole: *Garmanns sommer*, 2008.



Ill. 9: Today most authors work with artists expressing themselves in drawings or paintings when collaborating on children's books. Photographical children's books are few in Denmark, but elsewhere in Scandinavia we find photography used creatively in digital permutations with drawings and paintings by Faroese Stian Hole. He also has a fondness for the imaginary. Here is Aunt Borghild in *Garmanns sommer* (Garmann's summer) from 2008 approaching the Garden of Eden.

SUMMARY

Mette Kia Krabbe Meyer: *Immigrants and Elves. The Everyday and the Fantastic in Danish Photographical Children's Books*

When you think of children's picture books, the first images that come to mind will most likely be drawings. However, in the 1950s a quarter of all children's picture books were illustrated with photographs. The article gives an overview of the Danish photographical picture book tradition, which dates back to *Fotografiske Børnegrupper* (Photographs of groups of children) published in 1866, consisting of photographs by Harald Paetz and short poems by Hans Christian Andersen. It covers documentary stories, i.e. books that present the lives of children around the world. Some of these convey a decidedly social and political message. This article also covers books in which photography serves to enhance the imagination, and presents supernatural beings or humanized animals and objects.

